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Ecumenism and Salvation:
A Critical Appraisal of the Concept of Salvation
in Bilateral Ecumenical Dialogues (1970-2000)

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. L.M. Bouter,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid
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door

Marinus Pieter Cornelis Frederik Lanooij

geboren te Oud-Beijerland

promotoren: prof.dr. M.E. Brinkman
 prof.dr. E.A.J.G. Van der Borcht

Ecumenism and Salvation

For my parents
For Karin, Jan Pieter, Maarten and Agnès

In grateful memory of Anton Houtepen (1940-2010)
whose passion for and knowledge of ecumenism
were a source of inspiration to me

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Rienk Lanooy
Den Haag, 5 December 2012

The Texts

The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue: The Malta Report 1972: <i>The Gospel and the Church</i>	<i>Growth in Agreement</i> ¹ , 167-189
The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the United States of America, 1983: <i>Justification by Faith</i>	Anderson/Murphy/Burgess (ed), <i>Justification by Faith</i> , 10-12 ²
The International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue 1993: <i>Church and Justification</i>	<i>Growth in Agreement II</i> ³ , 485-565
The International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue 1998: <i>Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification</i>	<i>Growth in Agreement II</i> , 566-582
The Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue, ARCIC II, 1987: <i>Salvation and the Church</i>	<i>Growth in Agreement II</i> , 315-325
The Reformed-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, 1990: <i>Towards a Common Understanding of the Church</i>	<i>Growth in Agreement II</i> , 780-819
The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, 1986	<i>Growth in Agreement II</i> , 399-437
The Methodist-Reformed Dialogue, 1987: <i>Together in God's Grace</i>	<i>Growth in Agreement II</i> , 270-274
The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue, 1973: <i>The Leuenberg Agreement</i>	Martensen/Rusch (ed), <i>The Leuenberg Agreement and Lutheran-Reformed Relationships</i> ⁴
The International Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue, 1989: <i>Toward Church Fellowship</i>	<i>Growth in Agreement II</i> , 233-247

1 H. Meyer/L. Vischer (ed), *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, Faith and Order Paper 108, New York-Geneva (WCC) 1984.

2 H.G. Anderson/T.A. Murphy/J.A. Burgess (ed), *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue 7*, Minneapolis (Augsburg Publishing House) 1985.

3 J. Gross/H. Meyer/W.G. Rusch (ed), *Growth in Agreement II, Reports and Agreed Statements on a World Level, 1982-1998*, Faith and Order Paper 187, Michigan-Geneva (Eerdmans/WCC) 2000.

4 D.F. Martensen/W.G. Rusch (ed), *The Leuenberg Agreement and Lutheran-Reformed Relationships: Evaluations by North American and European Theologians*, Augsburg (Augsburg Fortress) 1989.

- The Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, 1970-1986: *Dialogue Between Neighbours* Kamppuri (ed), *Dialogue between Neighbours*⁵
- The Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue in North America, 1992: *Christ in Us and Christ for Us* Meyendorff/Tobias (ed), *Salvation in Christ*, 15-33⁶
- The Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue, 1976: *The Dublin Report* *Growth in Agreement*, 340-366

5 H.T. Kamppuri (ed), *Dialogue between Neighbours: The Theological Conversations between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, 1970-1986; Communiqués and Theses*, Publications of Luther-Agricola Society B 17, Helsinki 1986

6 J. Meyendorff/R. Tobias (ed), *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue*, Minneapolis (Augsburg Fortress) 1992

Used Abbreviations

ACC	Anglican Consultative Council
ARCIC	Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission
<i>ATR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BCEIA	Bishop's Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (USA)
BWA	Baptist World Alliance
<i>Catholica</i>	<i>Catholica: Vierteljahresschrift für Ökumenische Theologie</i>
CCEE	Council of European Episcopal Conferences
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
CEC	Conference of European Churches
<i>CPUB</i>	<i>Centro Pro Unione Bulletin</i>
CWC	Christian World Communion
DECC	Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council
<i>DEM</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement</i>
Dombes	Group des Dombes
<i>EPS</i>	<i>Ecumenical Press Service</i>
<i>ER</i>	<i>The Ecumenical Review</i>
ERCDOM	Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission
<i>ET</i>	<i>Ecumenical Trends</i>
<i>EvTh</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>FKT</i>	<i>Forum Katholische Theologie, Vierteljahresschrift für das Gesamtgebiet der Katholischen Theologie</i>
FO	Faith and Order
<i>GTT</i>	<i>Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift</i>
<i>IKZ</i>	<i>Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift</i>
<i>Irénikon</i>	<i>Irénikon: Revues des Moines de Chevetogne</i>
<i>ISer</i>	<i>Information Service, Secretariat (since 1989: Pontifical Council) for Promoting Christian Unity</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JES</i>	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
<i>JMP</i>	<i>The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate</i>
<i>KeT</i>	<i>Kerk en Theologie</i>
<i>KuD</i>	<i>Kirche und Dogma</i>
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
<i>LWI</i>	<i>Lutheran World Information</i>
<i>MD</i>	<i>Materialdienst des konfessionskundlichen Instituts</i>

<i>Missionalia</i>	<i>Journal of the South African Missiological Society</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>Mid-Stream</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NTT</i>	<i>Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift</i>
<i>OF</i>	<i>Orthodoxes Forum</i>
<i>OiC</i>	<i>One in Christ</i>
<i>ÖR</i>	<i>Ökumenische Rundschau</i>
PCPCU	Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (of the Roman Catholic Church), until 1989 called SPCU
<i>PP</i>	<i>Priests & People</i>
<i>PS</i>	<i>Positions luthériennes</i>
<i>RW</i>	<i>Reformed World</i>
SPCU	Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (of the Roman Catholic Church), since 1989 called PCPCU
<i>TBLNT</i>	<i>Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TvT</i>	<i>Tijdschrift voor theologie</i>
<i>US</i>	<i>Una Sancta</i>
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches (predecessor of the WCRC)
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRC	World Communion of Reformed Churches (formerly called WARC)
WEF	World Evangelical Fellowship
<i>WMANT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament</i>
WMC	World Methodist Council
<i>WUNT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>ZKTh</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie</i>
<i>ZThK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Introduction

In this study we present the results of an analysis and evaluation of bilateral ecumenical dialogues in view of their soteriological content. Bilateral ecumenical dialogues - officially authorised dialogues between two⁷ partners concerning doctrinal matters in general - explicitly or implicitly speak of salvation. Salvation ('Heil', 'Salut') is an encompassing expression for all kinds of different soteriological concepts presented by Scripture and tradition. These concepts have been valued differently depending on the contexts in which they were used. In his article 'The Change of the Images of Salvation in the History of Theology' Greshake made clear that every era has its own quest for salvation⁸. Hence, differences in confessional, theological, cultural and socio-political circumstances have led to all kinds of soteriological concepts and to different interpretations of these concepts. In the past this has caused controversies, for example with regard to diverging interpretations of concepts like grace, justification, sanctification, and more recently of concepts like liberation and redemption as was the case at the Bangkok conference in 1972⁹.

Since the early 1960's the bilateral dialogues have dealt with these controversies. How do they cope with these controversies and which role do the different confessions play in these discussions? Do they search for convergence and in what sense do they do so? Are the talks limited to a friendly exchange of mutual views? Can we speak of consensus now and then? Which soteriological concepts play a role in the talks and is there a relationship to the exegetical insights that have been developed in the same period that *grosso modo* show a large consensus on the plurality of soteriological concepts in the New Testament? And finally, what do the results of the dialogues mean for ecumenical theology in the perspective of a common witness with regard to salvation in the present time, in particular in a secularised world? In short: since they started in the 1960's, in what direction did the soteriological content of the bilateral ecumenical dialogues develop?

First of all, one should consider what has been done in this field. In particular A. Birmelé paid considerable attention to the role of soteriology in ecumenical dialogues. In his book *Le salut en Jésus Christ dans les dialogues œcuméniques*¹⁰ he analyses several ecumenical dialogues, especially the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, in view of their soteriological content. He demonstrates that in and behind the ecclesiological discussions on e.g. baptism, eucharist and ministry, differences in view of grace and salvation, redemption and liberation, justification and sanctification hinder a potential convergence between the partners in dialogue. Therefore, Birmelé is reluctant to approve the 'far-reaching consensus' that for example the *Malta Report* claimed to be possible in the interpretation of justification. Not so much because of the interpretation of the concept of justification itself, but because of the role of the church in the

7 Not many international dialogues involve more than two partners. Well known is the Lutheran-Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue ('trialogue') on marriage, called 'The Theology of Marriage and the Problem of Mixed Marriages' (1976) in: Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 277-306. On a national level we can discern several 'trialogues', cf. 'List of Dialogues', CPUB 79 (2011) 10-32. This regularly updated list can also be found on-line at www.prounione.urbe.it.

8 G. Greshake, 'Der Wandel der Erlösungsvorstellungen in der Theologieggeschichte' in: *Gottes Heil – Glück des Menschen: Theologische Perspektiven*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien (Herder) 1973, 50-79.

9 Cf. *Bangkok Assembly 1973: Minutes and Reports of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism*, Geneva (WCC) 1973.

10 A. Birmelé, *Le salut en Jésus-Christ dans les dialogues œcuméniques*, Cogitatio Fidei 141, Paris-Genève (Cerf/Labor & Fides) 1986.

way justification is appropriated. According to Birmelé the decisive question between Lutherans and Roman Catholics concerns the question about the instrumentality of the church. A possible convergence on soteriology does not lead to ecclesial unity as long as there is no convergence on the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation. Hence, according to Birmelé "the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue presents (1) an ample consensus on salvation in Christ, but (2) a fundamental difference on the nature of the church in the transmission of salvation"¹¹.

If Birmelé paid such a profound attention to soteriology in ecumenical dialogues, why should one pay attention to the subject again? There are several reasons to do so. First of all, Birmelé's approach is mainly focussed on the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue and less on other dialogues. Moreover, since 1986, when he published his book, the number of ecumenical dialogues has rapidly increased. Thirdly, and this is the most important reason, his ecclesiological approach leaves limited room for a wider soteriological perspective: the question about the meaning of salvation itself. Birmelé's starting point is a confessional one. It is prompted by the Lutheran point of view that justification is not just one of the many concepts of salvation, but the encompassing centre of Christian faith and the church¹². From this point of view, he evaluates the results of the ecumenical dialogues. So, because from the outset Birmelé equates salvation in Christ with justification of the sinner through faith by grace alone, neither the essence nor the place of salvation in the church are questioned. It is the church itself and its role in salvation that has to be discussed. And thus, it is no surprise that he recommends the ecumenical dialogues, at least the Lutheran-Roman Catholic one, that they should pay substantial attention to ecclesiology¹³. In the meantime this leads to a narrowing of the issue of soteriology because the focus shifts from soteriology as such to the role of the church in soteriology. And so one could ask whether in the end the approach of Birmelé left certain aspects of soteriology unnoticed, aspects which against the background of the challenges Christian theology and in particular ecumenism are about to meet in search of an accountable faith are so important. Should not the ecumenical dialogues also pay attention to the meaning of soteriology itself? We think they should. It is the aim of this study to place the ecumenical dialogues in a wider soteriological perspective.

This wider soteriological perspective can only be found if we know what is said about salvation in ecumenical dialogues. In the first place it must be said that not all bilateral dialogues deal with soteriology, at least not explicitly. From their inception onwards, the international bilateral dialogues have produced and published already more than 2000 pages of dialogue texts, but only a few of the reports have been explicitly devoted to soteriology. This does not mean that soteriology is absent in the other reports. In dialogues that deal with ecclesiology, sacraments and ministry, soteriological questions about grace, redemption, liberation, justification and sanctification very often play an important role, be it in the background. As we mentioned before, it is the merit of Birmelé that he has made clear that many dialogues that deal with e.g. the sacraments, in fact deal with soteriology, in particular the specific problem of the appropriation of salvation and the church's role in this. In many dialogues, when it comes to a right understanding of, for example baptism, eucharist, the church, the recurring question is not: what do they mean, but: who is at work? Is the salvific

11 R. Lanooy, 'Towards a Broader Hermeneutics of Salvation', in: R. Lanooy (ed), *For Us And For Our Salvation: Seven Perspectives on Christian Soteriology*, IIMO Research Publication 40, Utrecht (IIMO) 1994, 148.

12 Birmelé, *Le salut*, 11.

13 Birmelé, *Le salut*, 315; Birmelé, 'Sola gratia: Le salut en Jésus Christ dans les dialogues oecuméniques', *PS* 34 (1986) 232.

effect of baptism, the eucharist, the church itself a result of the initiative of God or the human being, or both and if the latter is true, how do they relate to each other? We see that this implicit soteriological theme, the way salvation is appropriated, returns in many of the dialogues. When we, by way of an example, take a look at the Lima-report, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*¹⁴, to which many dialogues refer, we quite easily discern the issue of appropriation in the first section on baptism. There it is said that

baptism is God's gift and our human response to that gift... The necessity of faith for the reception of salvation embodied and set forth in baptism is acknowledged by all churches. Personal commitment is necessary for responsible membership in the body of Christ (*Baptism* § 8)

Later on in one of the commentaries on *Baptism of Believers and Infants* (Baptism § 11-13) this issue is tackled again as it explains that

the differences between infant and believers' baptism become less sharp when it is recognised that both forms of baptism embody God's own initiative in Christ and express a response of faith made within the believing community (*Baptism*, Commentary § 12).

In both quotations the issue at stake is the question how God and human beings are related to each other when it comes to "the reception of salvation" (§ 8). The question is 'solved' by claiming that both God's initiative and men's commitment are required, though it is not explained how the two are related to each other.

Precisely because the relationship between God and human beings in the appropriation of salvation is a recurring question in so many ecumenical dialogues, it is not by coincidence that some of the dialogues have been devoted to the question itself. For our analysis we have decided not to delve deeply into dialogues in which the implicit soteriological question about the appropriation is at stake, but to go right to the heart of the matter and to concentrate on those dialogues in which soteriology itself is discussed. We will come back to this in chapter 1.4 called 'Is Soteriology a Theme in its Own Right?'

Methodology

Hence, in the following chapter we will analyse eight reports concerning those dialogues that pay attention to soteriology. We decided to limit the dialogues in number and period¹⁵. The number is limited by the question whether the dialogue at stake is devoted to the question of soteriology. We could have chosen more dialogues in which soteriology plays a – be it modest – role. The eight we have chosen for the present study are selected because they are illustrative of the soteriological presuppositions that remain hidden in other bilateral dialogues. Starting-point, although not exclusive, are the international dialogues, not only because they are better-known, but also because they very often incorporate results of national or regional dialogues. Furthermore we have chosen to confine the period in which the dialogues were produced and published to the years 1970-2000. The year 2000 refers to the

¹⁴ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper 111, Geneva (WCC) 1982.

¹⁵ Compared to the rapidly increasing number of bilateral (occasionally trilateral or multilateral) dialogues on the international, regional or national level eight is a very small number of dialogues. The twenty-sixth supplement of the bibliography of interchurch and interconfessional dialogues counts about two hundred concluded and continuing dialogues; cf. 'A Bibliography of Interchurch and Interconfessional Theological Dialogues: Twenty-sixth Supplement (2011)', *CPUB* 79 (2011) 10-32. For the period 19965-1991 cf. also G. Gassmann, *International Bilateral Dialogues 1965-1991: Commissions, Meetings, Themes and Reports*, Faith and Order Paper 156 Part I, Geneva (WCC) 1991, 3-36.

publication of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church at the end of the year 1999.

The research question how soteriology plays a role in the discussions is divided into four sub-questions that are applied to all the dialogues.

These sub-questions are:

(1) Who grants salvation and for whom is it meant?

Here, the question at stake concerns the cause and the goal of salvation. Who is the giver and who is the receiver. And in what way is God giver and the human being (or world..) receiver?

(2) In what sense is Christ the pivotal person through whom salvation is offered?

The role Christ plays in salvation can be delineated in different ways. Is he actively involved in the way salvation is given or not, and in what way is he involved: does the emphasis lay on his death, his life, his resurrection, his presence in the Spirit?

(3) How is salvation appropriated and what is the role of the church?

The ways in which salvation is given 'through Christ' can differ. Is the church actively or passively involved in this process? Who is involved anyway?

(4) Finally, what are the main concepts used to describe salvation?

Does a bilateral dialogue use specific concepts to define salvation, does it use one or several concepts and does it explicate the reason why a specific concept is used?

Of course, not all dialogues give an answer to each of these questions, and if they do the answer is not always clear or unambiguous. Many dialogues focus on one or on a few particular issues, leaving out other topics which are not directly related to the main controversy between the two churches in dialogue. In the case of soteriology this means that, whereas in recent times ecclesiology has developed so as to become such an important theme, the question about the relationship between church and salvation is much more at stake in the discussions than, e.g. the question who grants salvation. Similarly, dialogues in which ecclesiology plays a secondary role emphasise other, e.g. anthropological aspects.

Chapter 1 (An Introduction to Bilateral Ecumenical Dialogues) is a general introduction to the bilateral dialogues. This cannot be done properly without paying attention to the wider ecumenical movement, in particular the multilateral dialogue of Faith and Order (WCC). We will go into the history (1.1), the goals (1.2) and the themes (1.3) of the dialogues. In 1.4 we will come closer to the theme of the study in asking whether soteriology is a specific theme in the dialogues. The first chapter will be concluded with an analysis of the Edinburgh Conference (1937), which can be seen as an early pioneer in the field of ecumenism and salvation (1.5 What Happened Before?).

In chapter 2 to 9 we will analyse the eight bilateral dialogues. In five of them the Roman Catholic Church is involved, two of them take place in the Protestant domain and one is an encounter between the Orthodox tradition of the east and the Lutheran tradition of the west. The international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue consists of four reports that are examined: the international so-called *Malta Report*, 1972, the USA report *Justification by Faith*, 1983, the international report *Church and Justification*, 1994 and the well-known *Joint Declaration*, 1999. From the international Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue (ARCIC II) we

chose the report *Salvation and the Church*, 1987 and from the international Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue the report *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, 1990. These dialogues are (partly) devoted to the relationship between soteriology and ecclesiology. This relationship is less prominent in the international Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue. The first report this dialogue produced, called *Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission*, 1986, concentrates on questions about soteriology and the individual. Similarly the international Methodist-Reformed dialogue, *Together in God's Grace*, 1987, deals with individual election and free will. The European and international Lutheran-Reformed dialogue, respectively verbalised in the *Leuenberg Agreement*, 1973 and the report *Toward Church Fellowship*, 1989, focus on soteriology as the heart of their striving for church unity. In the regional dialogues between Lutherans and Orthodox the Finnish (Lutheran)-Russian (Orthodox) dialogue, The Järvenpää (1974) and Kiev (1977) reports which are part of the document *Dialogue Between Neighbours* and the American Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue, *Christ in Us and Christ for Us*, 1992 the partners in dialogue discuss their confessional understanding of salvation. Finally in its second report called *Dublin Report*, 1976, the international Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue pays attention to the meaning of salvation for contemporary times, the content of the church's witness. We have deliberately chosen to deal with every dialogue in a separate chapter in order to show that every dialogue has its own approach, length, questions, history etc.

Every analysis will be completed by four concluding remarks that correspond to the four sub-questions mentioned above. In chapter 10 we will bring the most important results of the analyses together, including several references to other ecumenical dialogues, concluded by some evaluative remarks.

Chapter 1

An Introduction to Bilateral Ecumenical Dialogues

1.1 History

Talking about *the* contemporary ecumenical movement is talking about a variety of movements that have a search in common for unity in whatever form¹⁶. Despite this variety, the World Council of Churches (WCC) generally draws most attention, not least because the WCC itself comprises several ecumenical movements relating to mission, doctrine and ethos. In the 19th century Western world the growing consciousness of Christianity as a world-wide phenomenon gave rise to a vigorous extension of the Christian panorama. A climate of globalization and pluralism opened up new horizons which were previously the domain of individuals and remained beyond the perception of most people. Countless missionary and student organizations, originating in the pietistic revival movements and the so-called Great Awakening¹⁷ and disregarding confessional and denominational lines (though mainly within Protestantism), were actively striving for the 'evangelization of the world in this generation'. The 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh became one of the great landmarks of this 19th century 'spirituality of conquest'¹⁸. Co-operation became the key-word of the conference: co-operation, as a necessary condition to fulfil the world-wide task. The conference became the pivot point of the early modern ecumenical movement, in concluding the 19th century outburst of missionary enthusiasm as well as opening up the process that would lead to the modern ecumenical movement. Being mainly Protestant, including the Anglican church, the conference "summed up and focused much of the previous century's movement for uniting Christians in giving the Gospel to the world"¹⁹. Mission and unity came closer as two connected partners in the spreading of the Christian faith. Without unity credible mission was practically regarded as ineffective and theologically unacceptable by many missionaries. One of the eight conference topics, - co-operation and the promotion of unity -, expressed this interest in unity, where it was reported that "the aim of all missionary work (is) to plant in each non-Christian nation one undivided Church of Christ"²⁰. Notwithstanding this theological point of view the conference was practically oriented on co-operation in mission as a struggle of Christianity to conquest the non-Christian world.

Yet the conference was of great importance for the further development of the ecumenical movement, despite the material and spiritual catastrophe of World War I which placed the missionary and ecumenical movements in a totally new setting. The most direct result was the constitution of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921, which was integrated in the WCC forty years later. Secondly, Edinburgh's vision of one church explicitly encouraged the formation of the Faith and Order movement. Charles Brent, delegated to the Edinburgh

16 Cf. L.A. Hoedemaker/A.W.J. Houtepen/J.Th. Witvliet, *Oecumene als leerproces: Inleiding in de oecumenica*, IIMO Research Publication 37, Utrecht-Leiden (IIMO) 1993, 6vv.; H. Meyer, 'Christian World Communions: Identity and Ecumenical Calling', *ER* 46/4 (1994) 383.

17 R. Rouse/S.C. Neill (ed), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, Geneva (WCC) 1986³, 309-349.

18 Hoedemaker/Houtepen/Witvliet, *Oecumene als leerproces*, 61. Cf. also B. Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Grand Rapids (Eerdmans) 2009, 82.

19 Rouse/Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 355.

20 Quoted in: Rouse/Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 359.

conference, realised that the practical outlook of the conference was only one step on the ecumenical road. A second, inevitable step should be the examination of the causes of divisions with a view on their removal²¹. Thirdly, although there is no direct relationship to the genesis of the Life and Work movement, the influence of the Student Christian Movement / World Student Christian Federation both on the planning of the Edinburgh Conference 1910 and the ecumenical atmosphere the Life and Work conference developed, is evident²².

Parallel to the missionary developments in the 19th century and their impact on the ecumenical movement in the 20th century ran the broadening of the internal Christian horizon within the churches. Globalization and pluralism also influenced churches towards crossing the borders of denomination, confession, nation, race and culture. Similar to the influence of Anglo-American missionary agencies on the ecumenical tendencies in the field of mission, was the vital role of the American and British churches in this process. The transconfessional ideal of Campbell, the Oxford Movement and the struggle of many other Anglo-Americans²³ led to the growing conviction that co-operation in the field of mission was not enough. The vision of one church at the Edinburgh 1910 conference and, at the same time, the rule not to discuss doctrinal differences urged theologians like Brent to initiate a conference on matters concerning Faith and Order. Contrary to their absence at the missionary conferences, the Orthodox churches were involved from the very beginning²⁴. The famous letter of the ecumenical Patriarch (1920) to form a league (*koinonia*) of churches and to renounce proselytism initiated a new period which drew East and West towards closer fellowship. The Roman Catholic Church stayed outside the movement for ecclesiastical reasons.

During the second half of the 19th century a globalizing tendency took place within various confessions and it became one of the first manifestations of the ecumenical movement. Seventh-day Adventists (1863) Anglicans (1867), Reformed (1875), Methodists (1881), Old Catholics (1889), Congregationalists (1891), Baptists (1905), Disciples/Churches of Christ (1930) organized themselves in world-wide fellowships which meant a break-through in their geographical and denominational isolation. Their primary goal was, however, to focus on internal affairs, on closer fellowship within the confessional families through mutual support of the churches, solidarity between weaker brothers and stronger sisters, and unfolding their own position over against or, more ecumenically, towards other church communions. This does not mean that they were not important to the ecumenical movement in its early days. In particular the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral²⁵, accepted at the 1888 Anglican Lambeth conference (again Anglo-Americans) turned out to be of major importance. However, whereas in the beginning the

21 Rouse/Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 360-361, 405-407.

22 J.H. Oldham, for example, was secretary of the Continuation Committee of the Edinburgh Conference and he organized and prepared the Life and Work conference in Oxford, 1937. The significance of personal relationships between missionary and ecumenical involved persons in the early days of the modern ecumenical movement is not to be underestimated; many of them had a Student Christian Movement (SCM) / World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) background and they brought about many of the characteristic developments in the Edinburgh 1910/IMC, Faith and Order and Life and Work movements; cf. Rouse/Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 341. Cf. also K. Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J.H. Oldham*, Edinburgh-Geneva (T&T Clark/WCC) 1999.

23 Hoedemaker/Houtepen/Witvliet, *Oecumene als leerproces*, 196-199.

24 Orthodox were not present, and indeed had not been invited in Edinburgh 1910; neither were Roman Catholics. The former because (1) as a subject of mission the Western understanding of mission was beyond their scope, and (2) for some of the Western churches (including the Roman Catholic) the Orthodox churches were considered as a missionary object (proselytism). The Roman Catholic Church, however, was also active in mission in the same 'spirituality of conquest', but much more as a church than as an individually focused (lay)movement outside the churches like in Protestantism.

25 It summed up the essentials for unity: (1) Holy Scriptures of Old Testament and New Testament; (2) The Nicene Creed; (3) two sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist; and (4) the historic Episcopate.

ecumenical movement was mainly a matter of individual churchleaders and theologians, and later on a matter of the churches (the WCC as a fellowship of *churches*), these fellowships as confessional bodies stayed more or less outside the transconfessional scene²⁶. Their initial ecumenical advance turned out to be a disadvantage when the WCC became a transconfessional body of churches and not of confessions. Later, at the New Delhi Assembly 1961, their position was seen by some as indispensable on the road to unity²⁷, while others, particularly in Asia and Africa, saw them as a threat to wider unity. In fact, sometimes they were regarded as a hindrance to concrete ecumenical advance²⁸. Confession oriented fellowships²⁹, like the Lutherans, who organized themselves in 1947, met with harsh critique from the East Asia Christian Conference at Bangkok 1964³⁰. The question was whether confessional identity and ecumenical commitment were compatible or not³¹ and this was concentrated in three questions:

- (1) Do the world confessional organizations rest on a theological principle or do they simply gather together churches with a common history and tradition?
- (2) Even where world confessional organizations are seeking to preserve for the universal Church some fundamental insights into an aspect of Christian truth, is this best done by an organization built around that truth?
- (3) Are the confessions and doctrines which are the historical basis of these world confessional organizations living realities among those people in these confessional families?³²

Apart from the changing theological climate which resulted in the opinion "that confessional diversities or different theological traditions can very well find a meaningful place in the unity we seek, provided that they have lost their divisive character"³³, the clearest answer given by the confessional bodies to the reproach of a lack of ecumenical commitment was their engagement in the ecumenical dialogue itself. In 1967 the secretaries of the world confessional families produced a document to evaluate their position in the ecumenical field. They agreed that "everything possible should be done by the Confessional Families together, and by the Confessional Families and the World Council of Churches to encourage the realization of further unity among the churches"³⁴. In fact, the World Confessional Families had already acted in this way, since they had started their own type of ecumenical involvement through the bilateral

26 "In particular, world confessional families were in the past rarely directly involved in theological conversations with each other", N. Ehrenström/G. Gassmann, *Confessions in Dialogue: A Survey of Bilateral Conversations Among World Confession Families 1959-1974*, Geneva (WCC) 1975³, 9. In the beginning of the 20th century one of the exceptions was the Anglican communion which sought contacts with the Roman Catholic (1921-26), Orthodox (1930), and Old Catholic (Bonn Agreement, 1931) church.

27 Cf. also Visser 't Hooft's balanced view in a sermon held at a meeting of the World Methodist Council: he spoke about 'extremely positive elements' and a common spiritual heritage that would be relevant, but also about the 'spiritual laziness' of denominationalism and the threat of regarding a confession as an end in itself; cf. H. E. Fey (ed), *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1948-1968*, Geneva (WCC) 1986², 123-133.

28 "As a whole, the integration of denominational families must be reckoned as a stage in the movement towards the ultimate unification of the Church. Temporarily, however, and perhaps for long periods, they may prove instruments for delay and the sharpening of differences, or even result in holding back the more ecumenically-minded Churches and compelling them to take the slower pace of their confessional group", Rouse/Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 620.

29 Anglicans, Orthodox, Roman Catholics and others do not consider themselves to be a particular confession, that is, as churches marked by ties to particular creeds.

30 Fey, *The Ecumenical Advance*, 124-127; 'Issues on "Confessional Families and the Churches in Asia"', *ER* 16/5 (1964) 553-557.

31 Cf. Meyer, 'Christian World Communions', 383-384.

32 'Issues on "Confessional Families and the Churches in Asia"', *ER* 16/5 (1964) 555; also quoted in: Fey, *The Ecumenical Advance*, 125.

33 Meyer, 'Christian World Communions', 384.

34 Quoted in: Fey, *The Ecumenical Advance*, 134. At this meeting the term World Confessional Family was adopted.

dialogues in the 1960s. Whereas initially the multilateral dialogue prevailed after the WCC came into existence, the official entrance of the Roman Catholic Church on the ecumenical scene launched and particularly favoured this bilateral way of ecumenical dialogue. Although the Roman Catholic Church started to participate in the work of Faith and Order as well, it developed a "natural preference for bilateral dialogues"³⁵. This impulse, and the opinion that some specific problems between two churches could be handled more exactly in a bilateral dialogue, led to a flood of bilateral dialogues on different levels, internationally, regionally and nationally. In spite of their relative recent appearance on the ecumenical stage, compared to the multilateral dialogues "their positive role and function within the ecumenical movement has become fully apparent and is generally acknowledged" since the end of the 1970s³⁶. Their ecumenical commitment is at best symbolized by the change in self-designation from the more restrictive term World Confessional Families into the open-minded term Christian World Communions (CWC) in 1979.

This does not mean that the relation between the multilateral and bilateral dialogues is crystal-clear or regarded as such by everyone in the ecumenical field. We have seen the opposition against the World Confessional Families considering them to be anti-ecumenical as confessional bodies. However, when they engaged in the ecumenical dialogue itself, the question was raised how this dialogue would relate to the Faith and Order multilateral dialogue. Therefore in 1973 the Faith and Order Commission made the proposal for a 'Forum' on bilateral conversations. Not only the relationship between the two types of dialogue, also the interrelationship between the bilateral dialogues was at stake. The Forum actually met for the first time in 1978³⁷. Since then, ten 'forums' have taken place³⁸. Since the beginning one of the main points that has been on the agenda is the relation between the multilateral dialogues and the bilateral dialogues. At every meeting of the Forum it is repeated that bilateral and multilateral dialogues should not be considered as competitive, but as two movements within the one ecumenical movements. Each has its own speciality and both are interrelated. 'Complemental' is the key-word to describe this relationship³⁹. In the meantime the increase in quantity and importance of bilateral dialogues is so remarkable that on the Fifth Forum it was noticed that "some people take the view that only

35 Meyer speaks of a "natural preference for bilateral dialogues" explaining the Roman Catholic involvement in explicitly in bilateral type of ecumenism; H. Meyer, 'Dialogue, Bilateral', *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva (WCC) 1991, 280. Blei gives some arguments why the Roman Catholic Church opts for the engagement in bilateral dialogues, more than the multilateral way of discussion in his article 'The WARC in Bilateral Dialogue'; K. Blei, 'The WARC in Bilateral Dialogue: Introductory Remarks' in: H.S. Wilson (ed), *Bilateral Dialogues: The papers and findings of the WARC Consultation held from April 21-25, 1992 at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, U.S.A.*, Geneva (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) 1993, 12-13. Also Willebrands in his overview of ecumenical dialogues gives far more attention to the bilateral dialogues than to the multilateral one in Faith and Order. The latter is said to be "in some ways more difficult than bilateral (dialogues, RL)" despite the achievement of the Faith and Order *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* Report; J. Willebrands, 'Ecumenical Dialogue Today: An Overview', *Origins* 17/33 (1988) 567.

36 Meyer, 'Christian World Communions', 384.

37 According to its mandate it should facilitate the exchange of information among the bilateral dialogues; review recent developments; continue the discussion on themes of common interest; promote interaction between bilateral and multilateral dialogues; study the implications of the bilateral results for the ecumenical movement as a whole; and examine issues of method. Cf. *The Three Reports on the Forum on Bilateral Conversations*, Faith and Order Paper 107, Geneva (WCC) 1981, 2.

38 The ninth Forum took place in Germany, 2008. See the so-called *Breklum Statement* (www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/viii-forums-on-bilateral-dialogues/many-ways-to-christian-unity-the-ninth-forum-on-bilateral-dialogues-2008.html) and the Tenth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues, took place in March 2012 in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

39 "Do not bilateral dialogues militate against the theological work of the World Council of Churches? No, they complement it", Alan P.F. Sell, 'The Role of Bilateral Dialogues within the One Ecumenical Movement', *ER* 46/4 (1994) 458.

bilateral dialogues are really important: they argue that multilateral dialogues tend to be rather academic and superficial; more prone to compromise"⁴⁰. It is not said who these 'some people' are, but it is clear that the preference for the multilateral dialogue that once dominated ecumenical thinking is counterbalanced nowadays or even relativized sometimes. Hence, the forum emphasizes the different purposes but the one goal within the one ecumenical movement⁴¹. What this means in the concrete discussion is dealt with in the next paragraph on the goals of the dialogues.

1.2 Goals

Bilateral dialogues are official and doctrinal dialogues between two Christian World Communions (CWC)⁴². The aim of such discussions is "to overcome theological and ecclesiological divergences, and to reach consensus or convergence"⁴³ "for the sake of unity"⁴⁴, and differs from church union negotiations that they "do not seek to forecast the concrete form of unity to be achieved and leave the decision about organic unity, ..., to the individual churches in their particular situations"⁴⁵. The official character of the bilateral dialogues implicates that they strive towards consensus or convergence in view of concrete unity. Not individual theologians, church-leaders, lay-people as such are in dialogue with each other, but they discuss with each other as appointed representatives of a (group of) church(es)⁴⁶. Hence the churches involved aim at the realization of a kind of living ecclesial fellowship in whichever way they choose. Whereas many different churches are involved in this striving towards unity each dialogue is different in view of its methodology, its background, its participants, its themes, its schedule⁴⁷. The way unity is regarded (visible unity, structural/organic unity, church fellowship, communion of communions, full communion⁴⁸), how it is achieved (universal, regional, local) depends very much on the churches involved and their present and past relationship. Next to the more general goal of unity, a 'long-term' goal, specific aspects play a role in the particular aim of a dialogue. Every dialogue has its own point of concentration, its own specific, 'short-term' goals⁴⁹, which in

40 *Fifth Forum on Bilateral Conversations: Report*, Faith and Order Paper 156 Part II, Geneva (WCC) 1991, 41.

41 The *Brekum Statement* (the Ninth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues) stated: "There is an interplay between bilateral and multilateral dialogues at both the regional and international level. Multilateral dialogues bring together communities spanning a wide range of traditions and contexts; they harvest and develop themes addressed in bilateral conversations. The actual reestablishment of unity, however, requires decisive action by individual communions and/or churches. Bilateral dialogues help facilitate such action", *Brekum Statement*, 1.

42 With the exception of the trilateral 'bilateral dialogue' between the LWF, the WARC and the Roman Catholic Church on 'The Theology of Marriage and the Problem of Mixed Marriages', Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 277-306.

43 Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 7.

44 Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 7.

45 *Confessions in Dialogue*, 125; cf. also Michael Kinnamon, 'Bilaterals and the Uniting and United Churches', *JES* 23/3 (1986) 377-385.

46 There is no doubt that individual participants leave their stamp on the results of a dialogue. For that reason the composition of a balanced group of representatives is of major relevance. The participants, nevertheless, always keep in mind that they represent a (group of) church(es) with its/their wide variety of members, convictions, cultural backgrounds etc. Cf. the methodological issues for further consideration regarding the bilateral dialogues, nr. 3 and 4 in *Fifth Forum on Bilateral Conversations*, 39.

47 Cf. *Fifth Forum on Bilateral Conversations*, 45, 50-53.

48 "One can observe that the actual 'models of unity' in which those goals should be implemented often remain still vague or open", *Fifth Forum on Bilateral Conversations*, 51.

49 "While the unity Christ wills for his Church is the ultimate goal of all of them, in some cases the proximate goal of a bilateral is more modest – such as mutual knowledge and respect, the identification of areas of agreement and disagreement, or the dealing with tensions that currently exist among the churches in various

some instances closely correspond with the 'long-term' goal of unity. Several closely related churches have clearly expressed their aim to be full union and community in every aspect⁵⁰. Other dialogues have a less far-reaching goal⁵¹, like the promotion of mutual understanding or the removal of prejudices, the adjustment of different views of past history through a reconciliation of memories⁵², or the improvement of relations in general. The goal of concrete unity is most obvious for churches that, from a historical, doctrinal and geographical point of view, are closely related. However, the striving for unity depends equally on the self-understanding of the churches involved. If the self-understanding of a church does not involve an eager longing for visible unity, the dialogue for unity will have a different nature from that regarding it as an essential part of its ecclesiology⁵³. This means that, while the principal 'long term' goal of unity in whatever form remains the same, the stages of proceeding and the specific goals that belong to that particular stage do not proceed simultaneously in all dialogues⁵⁴.

Therefore the first Forum on Bilateral Conversations (1978) already asked the bilateral dialogues to keep in mind how much the various efforts complement each other and to consider them in the context of the relation between what it called the proximate and the (pen)ultimate. Without 'long-term' goal dialogues easily become a bureaucratic procedure in which certain contextual/relative types of unity are considered as the final point of dialogue. Without 'short-term' goals which are achievable, dialogues get bogged down in unrealistic visions and get out of touch with concrete promises and problems of ecumenical endeavour.

The asymmetry between the various dialogues is inherently part of the multilateral dialogue of

parts of the world", <http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p2/breklum-statement.pdf>.

50 Anglican-Lutheran, Anglican-Roman Catholic, Methodist-Roman Catholic, Orthodox-Old Catholic, Orthodox-Roman Catholic, Orthodox-Oriental Orthodox.

51 E.g. Baptist-Reformed, Baptist-Lutheran, Pentecostal-Roman Catholic, Evangelical-Orthodox, Orthodox-Reformed.

52 As is the case in the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue; cf. also E. Honée, 'The Function of Church History in the Ecumenical Dialogue', in: M.E. Brinkman/H.P.J. Witte, *From Roots to Fruits: Protestants and Catholics Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, Geneva (WARC) 1998, 16-32.

53 Cf. the Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue where the two partners have a different opinion to what extent structural unity of the churches is necessary. "Baptists are eager for co-operation in mission and evangelism, but because of their congregational polity they are wary of structural integration (...) Where there is a call for structural unity or doctrinal unity, Baptists, mindful of their heritage, will be hesitant to join", Denton Lotz, 'Baptists', *DEM*, 88. That is why in this dialogue the ecclesiological questions played an important though not decisive role. First and foremost on the agenda was the attempt "to come to a mutual understanding of certain convergences and divergences...", 'The Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversations 1984-1988', *ISer* 72/1 (1990) 5.

54 When we compare, for example, the Anglican-Roman Catholic and Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogues we see the difference. One of the tasks given to the second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II) by Pope John Paul II and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Runcie, was to recommend "what practical steps will be necessary when (...) we are able to proceed to full communion" (quote from Common Declaration (1982) § 3: 'Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and the Archbishop of Canterbury: Canterbury 29 May 1982', *OiC* 18/3 (1982) 260-261; 'Common Declaration Of Rome and Canterbury', *ET* 11/10 (1982) 163-164; 'Pope John Paul II and Ecumenism', *ISer* 49/2-3 (1982) 46-47; *Called to Full Unity*, 300-302).

The task of the third phase of the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogue was to develop "a climate of mutual understanding in matters of faith and practice; to find points of genuine agreement as well as to indicate areas in which further dialogue is required" (quote from 'Perspectives on Koinonia', § 5. Also cited in J.A. Radano, 'The Pentecostal - Roman Catholic International Dialogue 1972-1991', *MS* 31/1 (1992) 27. Already in 1987 Jerry Sandidge made the remark that it was necessary "to reconsider the goals and objectives of the Dialogue" (J.L. Sandidge, *Roman Catholic / Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982): A Study in Developing Ecumenism I*, Studies in the Intercultural History Of Christianity 44, Frankfurt am Main (Peter Lang) 1987, 427. However, he does not make a suggestion in which direction possible changes should go.

the WCC in which churches belonging to the Christian World Communions and from outside have to work together simultaneously. Therefore the aim of the commission on Faith and Order is more similar to the general 'long-term' aim of the bilateral dialogues than to their particular 'short-term' goals. According to its by-laws, the aim of Faith and Order is "to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, in order that the world may believe"⁵⁵. This does not mean that Faith and Order has no 'short-term' goals, but these goals are less related to concrete ways towards union and unity between two churches, although they can be very helpful in that process.

1.3 Themes

Apart from the varying conceptions of aims, there has been a wide range of themes under consideration in ecumenical dialogues⁵⁶. Like the variety in aims, the variety in themes has been dependent on the churches involved in the dialogue. Yet, the variety in themes in the multilateral dialogue has shown a much broader field of interest than in the bilateral dialogues, and this is not only because the multilateral dialogues have a longer history. The subjects dealt within the younger bilateral dialogues are chosen inasmuch as they at least were and often are still supposed to be a reason for separation. Hence, bilateral themes have been 'eucharist', 'ministry', 'authority in the church', 'baptism', 'apostolic succession', 'justification', 'sanctification', 'christology', 'pneumatology', 'creeds and confessions' and 'gospel, Scripture and tradition'⁵⁷. Questions that once formed the reason for division, e.g. between Lutherans and Roman Catholics (justification) are at issue, but also questions between churches which for several (historical, geographical) reasons never had any contact with each other and never went through a more or less painful process of separation, e.g. Methodists and Roman Catholics (sanctification), or Anglicans and Orthodox (ordination of women, ecclesiology). The multilateral dialogue, in particular the work of Faith and Order, has always been more (not only) related to contemporary issues in church and world and their interrelation⁵⁸.

55 Cf. appendix in David M. Paton (ed), *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November-10 December, 1975*, Geneva-London-Grand Rapids (WCC/SPCK/Eerdmans) 1976, 402; also Th. F. Best/G. Gassmann (ed), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Faith and Order Paper 166, Geneva (WCC) 1994, 309.

56 Bilateral dialogues, cf. Ehrenström/Gassmann, *Confessions in Dialogue*, 142-229; Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 505-514. Multilateral dialogues, cf. A.T. DeGroot, *An Index to the Doctrines, Persons, Events, Etc. of the Faith and Order Commission (...) 1910-1948 and Checklist Faith and Order Commission, Official, Numbered Publications Series I, 1910-1948; Series II, 1948-1970*, Geneva (WCC) 1970; L. Vischer (ed), *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963*, St. Louis (The Bethany Press) 1963, 223-246; G. Gassmann (ed), *Documentary History of Faith and Order, 1963-1993*, Faith and Order Paper 159, Geneva (WCC) 1993. Unfortunately the latter volume lacks an index of themes.

57 Ethics and social concern have been a minor subject under discussion. The 1971 Denver Report of the Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue dealt with issues like secularization and Christian home and family (interchurch marriage, divorce, contraception, abortion and care of the aged), though not extensively. The issue of family and marriage was also addressed in the 1976 'trilateral' dialogue (Lutheran-Reformed-Roman Catholic) that released the report 'The Theology of Marriage and the Problem of Mixed Marriages', Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 277-306. A major shift in subject matter has been the report 'Life In Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church' (Gross/Meyer/Rusch, *Growth in Agreement II*, 344-370) of ARCIC II. In 1995 the multilateral dialogue (Joint Working Group of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church) published a report called *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions*, in: Gross/Meyer/Rusch, *Growth in Agreement II*, 300-310. Cf. also M. Root, 'Ethics in Ecumenical Dialogues: A Survey and Analysis', *JES* 45/3 (2010) 357-375.

58 Gassmann mentions: "the nature of grace, the so-called non-theological factors, worship, intercommunion,

Perhaps one could say that Faith and Order has always had a more hermeneutical approach than the bilateral dialogues.

Yet from the beginning of bilateral and multilateral dialogue one of the most important themes has been the nature of baptism, eucharist and ministry. According to Gassmann, they reappear continuously as "a red thread running through this colorful ensemble of Christian concerns"⁵⁹. Not only because the older multilateral dialogue (Faith and Order) regarded mutual recognition of baptism, eucharist and ministry as elementary for unity from the very beginning but the bilateral dialogues "also turned to these issues, and this applies of course in addition to the multilateral dialogue, because the divisions between the churches can be identified and located most clearly in the differences on these issues"⁶⁰. The impact of the Faith and Order report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*⁶¹, not only on the churches but also within the ecumenical movement itself (the bilateral dialogues and church union negotiations), shows that these issues are recognized as fundamental and touch the heart of church division.

Although this still holds true, ecclesiology more and more became the focusing point during the 1980s. At the Fourth Forum in Bilateral Conversations in Switzerland 1985 the importance of exploring the nature of the church was testified⁶² and six years later the Fifth Forum confirmed that "almost all the bilateral dialogues in the last ten years have moved towards work on ecclesiology"⁶³. A short look at the indices of the bilateral dialogues confirms this⁶⁴. A more formal reason for ecclesiology becoming such an important theme in bilateral dialogues is the

institutionalism, God in nature and history, the authority of the bible, the *filioque* question, the unity of the church and the unity of humankind, the ordination of women, the handicapped and the community and unity of the church, the nature and form of the unity of the church, conciliarity, the community of women and men in the church...", G. Gassmann, 'Nature and Function of Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues and their Interrelation', *MS 25/3* (1986) 303.

59 Gassmann, 'Nature and Function of Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues and their Interrelation', 303. "There is a 'surplus' of themes on both (bilateral and multilateral, RL) sides, but there is also a clear concentration up to now on the three essential *koinonia* issues: baptism, eucharist and ministry" (304); cf. *Fourth Forum on Bilateral Conversations: Report*, Faith and Order Paper 125, Geneva (WCC) 1985, 7: "Baptism, eucharist and ministry have been recurrent, indeed central, themes of multilateral dialogues ever since the beginning of the Faith and Order movement" and also A.W.J. Houtepen, 'Naar een gemeenschappelijk verstaan van doop, eucharistie en ambt', *TvT* 24/3 (1984) 247-248.

60 G. Gassmann, 'Nature and Function of Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues and their Interrelation', 304.

61 *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper 111, Geneva 1982.

62 *Fourth Forum on Bilateral Conversations*, 13 (§ 22).

63 *Fifth Forum on Bilateral Conversations*, 45. Actually, the Fifth Forum on Bilateral Conversations had as theme 'The Understanding of the Church Emerging in the Bilateral Dialogues - Coherence or Divergence?'; cf. the Preface, *Fifth Forum on Bilateral Conversations*, 1. Cf. also Martensen: "It is clear that reflection on the nature of the church has come to play an increasingly important role in ecumenical dialogue over the past few decades"; Daniel F. Martensen, 'Introduction: Dialogue, Church Unity, and Corporate Belief', *JES* 23/3 (1986) 363.

64 Looking at the index of *Confessions in Dialogue* (Ehrenström/Gassmann, *Confessions in Dialogue*, 142-229) from 1975, one can notice that 'Church' is a topic among others, in any case not a subject which is called prominent and analysed separately, like, among others, Gospel, Scripture and Tradition; Eucharist; and Ministry. In Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement* one can already observe that 'Church' has the most references, followed by 'eucharist', 'ministry' and to a lesser extent 'baptism' (cf. Lanne: "in the bilateral conversations baptism has never been tackled as such, except with the Baptists. It has been more a question of justification"; Emmanuel Lanne, 'Two Decades of Bilateral Conversations and their Impact on the Ecumenical Movement', *MS 25/3* (1986) 311. Furthermore it is noteworthy that Meyer leaves out baptism when he specifies the doctrinal matters of the bilateral dialogues. He mentions: authority in the church, eucharist, ministry, ecclesiology; Meyer, 'Dialogue, Bilateral', *DEM*, 281). This applies even more to the second volume of *Growth in Agreement* in English, where baptism, eucharist and ministry have an equal number of references, whereas 'church' at least has twice as many.

growing involvement of the relatively large Roman Catholic Church (and to a lesser extent the Orthodox Churches) in the ecumenical movement and its preference to be involved in this particular bilateral way. As we quoted Meyer before: the Roman Catholic has a "natural preference for bilateral dialogues"⁶⁵. Because the Roman Catholic faith as it sees itself is so closely connected to a particular understanding of the church, ecclesiology has become an important issue with the entrance of the Roman Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement. The Roman Catholic Church, "which sees itself as a spiritually and structurally united, worldwide communion with a strong conviction of its special identity as the Church of Christ"⁶⁶, participates in ecumenical dialogue because of its particular understanding of the church as communion, *koinonia*. The late Cardinal Willebrands bases what he calls the obligation of the Roman Catholic Church to take part in ecumenical dialogue on the catholic understanding of the church as communion, "the central and fundamental idea running through all the documents of the (2nd Vatican, RL) council"⁶⁷. "We bishops ardently desire that the incomplete communion already existing with the non-Catholic churches and communities might (...) come to the point of full communion"⁶⁸. He considered ecclesiology to be "the root of some of the divisions between churches today"⁶⁹.

A second and more important reason, which is not specifically related to a particular church, is the common discovery that specific themes like baptism, eucharist and ministry cannot be adequately addressed without paying attention to the understanding of the church as the setting where baptism, eucharist and ministry are located and therefore the growing conviction that ecclesiology forms the crux in the attempts to overcome the difficulties in reaching unity. Schneider concludes in his article about the Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue *Church and Justification* that ecumenical theologians

have almost unanimously maintained (...) that agreements achieved about important specific themes need to be linked and grounded in a common statement about the nature and the mission of the Church⁷⁰

Although baptism, eucharist and ministry very often form the visible reality of church divisions, they do not exist as problems which can be solved apart from their setting which is the church. Convergence related to one of these issues is the result of a certain way of thinking about the nature of the church. At the same time this convergence has consequences for the understanding of the church from which the dialogue partners come. This means a shift towards ecclesiology, not simply as an underlying reason, but as an issue which cannot go unconsidered in matters of baptism, eucharist and ministry.

A similar development took place in the multilateral discussions on baptism, eucharist and ministry of *Faith and Order* which were influenced by some results of the bilateral dialogues, but which, in return, played a part in many other such dialogues at the same time. Parallel to the bilateral dialogues the influence of Roman Catholic and Orthodox theology (ecclesiology) is evident in the Faith and Order dialogue and therefore the attention to ecclesiology. However, the common view that baptism, eucharist and ministry and other ecumenical themes cannot be understood other than in the wider field of ecclesiology is also and even more a catalyst for further attention to the nature of the church. In fact, many reactions to the *Lima-report* refer to

65 Meyer, 'Dialogue, Bilateral', *DEM*, 280

66 Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 3.

67 Willebrands, 'Ecumenical Dialogue Today', 567.

68 Willebrands, 'Ecumenical Dialogue Today', 567.

69 Willebrands, 'Ecumenical Dialogue Today', 573.

70 Th. Schneider, 'The Dialogue Report in the Present Ecumenical Context: A Comment on Church and Justification', *ISer* 86/3-4 (1994) 182. He refers, among others, to the Fifth Forum of Bilateral Conversations.

the fact that the approach of the *Lima-report* already shows a kind of implicit ecclesiology, which explicitly came under discussion during the process of official responses of the churches⁷¹. One of the conclusions and recommendations in the *Report on the Process and Responses* on BEM was

*that ecclesiology be made a major study in future Faith and Order work. Such an ecclesiology in an ecumenical perspective must take into account the various ideas of the church which reflect the churches' different self-understanding and their views on the nature of the church and its unity. It could require the search for basic ecclesiological principles, which could provide common perspectives for the churches' different ecclesiologies and serve as a framework for their convergences*⁷².

Therefore the Faith and Order Commission in Budapest 1989 agreed to the proposal to undertake a study on the ecumenical perspectives on ecclesiology. This proposal was underlined at the World Conference on Faith and Order in Santiago 1994. According to the responses to BEM section III on the common life in Christ, the conference recommended further work on ecclesiology "which underlies and surrounds the understanding and practice of baptism, eucharist and ministry; and subsequent reflection has suggested that the notion and reality of *koinonia* furnishes a suitable leading category for this deeper study"⁷³.

At present, the search for 'basic ecclesiological principles' shows a remarkable convergence in the almost unanimous concentration on the use of the concept of *koinonia*, first of all in the bilateral and subsequently in the multilateral dialogue⁷⁴. Whereas the New Testament contains a wide variety of concepts to picture the church⁷⁵ *koinonia* is regarded as a fundamental concept.

In the multilateral dialogues the concept of *koinonia* was not fundamental to the understanding the church from the very beginning. Although its implicit use could be traced in early documents⁷⁶, as *koinonia*, or as communion or fellowship, the principal approach of ecclesiology was christologically oriented, in particular after World War II. In Amsterdam, 1948 the theme 'Man's Disorder and God's Design' still shows a theocentric-christocentric way of thinking, according to the WCC's basis, although the reports of the sections show internal diversity and

71 Cf. A.W.J. Houtepen, 'Towards an Ecumenical Vision of the Church', *OiC* 25 (1989) 217-237.

72 *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses*, Faith and Order Paper 149, Geneva (WCC) 1990, 148. Cf. also Gassmann (ed), *Documentary History 1963-1993*, 33: "All these four main Faith and Order themes are concerned with fundamental aspects of the nature and mission of the church".

73 Th. F. Best/G. Gassmann (ed), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Faith and Order Paper 166, Geneva (WCC) 1994, 251 (§ 29).

74 In 1989 at the Budapest meeting of Faith and Order Commission the *Report on the Process and Responses* on BEM prudently noted that "the notion of *koinonia* is currently being given serious attention by many churches and also in a number of bilateral conversations between the churches. It is suggested that it be pursued seriously in Faith and Order work towards a convergent vision on ecclesiology, although the notion of *koinonia* should not be regarded as the only possible approach", *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990*, 150. In 1991 at the Canberra Assembly *koinonia* became the central concept to picture the visible unity of the church, and in 1994 the whole World Conference of Faith and Order was organized around *koinonia*.

75 Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, London (Lutterworth Press) 1961; Jürgen Roloff, *Die Kirche im Neuen Testament*, Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament 10, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1993.

76 Lausanne, 1927 § 17-18 (*communion of believers*); Edinburgh, 1937 § 52.54.56-58.61-62 (*'koinōnia tōn hagiōn', the communion of saints*); Amsterdam, 1948 Vol I, p.18-19.35; Lund § 26.113 (*communio sanctorum*); Evanston, 1954 § 8 (*fellowship [koinonia]*); New Delhi, 1961 § 2.11 (*fellowship [koinonia]*); Montreal, 1963 § 46.71.133 (*koinonia*); Nairobi, 1975 (*fellowship*); all references in L. Vischer, *A Documentary History 1927-1963* except Nairobi, in: Gassmann (ed), *Documentary History 1963-1993*, and Montreal, in: P.C. Rodger/L. Vischer (ed), *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: The Report from Montreal 1963*, London (SCM Press) 1964.

different accents⁷⁷. In and from Lund 1952 ecclesiology was mainly considered from a christocentric perspective and this signified a farewell to the traditional comparative ecclesiology⁷⁸. Montréal, 1963 revealed a break-through regarding the views on Scripture and tradition (diachronic), but also a broadening in the sphere of ecclesiology (synchronic). During the second half the 1960s⁷⁹ and early 1970s Faith and Order, as well as the whole of the ecumenical movement⁸⁰, paid substantial attention to the content of the Christian witness: questions regarding the contemporary role of the church in the world, the contribution of the church and the ecumenical movement toward the unity of mankind in the struggle against all kinds of injustice, were added to the traditional church dividing issues and a more inwardly focused ecumenical approach. At the Louvain meeting of Faith and Order in 1971, the synchronic approach as a shift to the (unity of the) world approached a provisional climax in the multilateral dialogue⁸¹. However, the programme to consider church unity within the field of human unity faced some difficulties because of the many problems which had to be tackled, such as anthropology, ambiguity in the notion of 'unity of mankind', the comparability of the 'two unities', the abstractness of the perspective from which such 'unities' could be discussed⁸². Therefore it is not surprising that other aspects of ecclesiology attracted most attention. The beginning consensus on the issues of baptism, eucharist and ministry and the emphasis on contextuality in Christian witness in Accra, 1974 led away from a more universalistic approach which aimed at maximization. This tendency got stronger in the second half of the 1980s and emphasis was put more and more on a pragmatic approach of the problems concerning inter-church differences, whereas the concern for the external essential features of the church went less noticed. In Lima 1982 this resulted in the presentation of the so-called *Lima-report*, a major moment in ecumenical history. From an ecclesiological perspective most attention was drawn to the internal essential characteristics of the church. The concern for the role of the church in and for the world faded more or less into a background position, although a new, but less utopian study-programme was launched in Lima, called 'The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community'⁸³. A similar development of internal orientation took place in the programme on the common understanding of our apostolic faith today. The Creed of Nicea-Constantinople (381) became starting point for a common explanation of our apostolic faith. Although, according to the Faith and Order meeting in Bangalore, 1978, the study-programme

77 The ecclesiology of section I pictures the church mainly as the Body of Christ ("we are one in Jesus Christ" § 2; "There is but one Lord and one Body" § 31), whereas section II on the church's witness lays the accent on God and his purpose (§ 32) and design for the world in which Christ and the Spirit play a essential role and eventually the church [section-numbering Vischer (ed), *Documentary History 1927-1963*].

78 The starting point is 'Christ and his Church' in which Christ is delineated as the Lord of the church, from the beginning to the end actively involved in it ("We believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, who loved the Church and gave himself for it, and has brought the Church into an abiding union with Himself" § 7).

79 Aarhus 1964, Bristol 1967.

80 Culmination point for the whole of the ecumenical movement is the Uppsala Assembly, 1968 where the relation between church and world is concisely summarized in the sentence: "The Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind", N. Goodall *The Uppsala Report 1968*, Geneva (WCC) 1968, 17.

81 The theme of the conference was 'The Unity of the Church - the Unity of Mankind', and focused in five sections on the relationship between the struggle for justice in society, the encounter with living faiths, the struggle against racism, the handicapped in society, and the differences in culture, cf. Gassmann (ed), *Documentary History 1963-1993*, 26 and *Faith and Order Louvain 1971: Study Reports and Documents*, Faith and Order Paper 59, Geneva (WCC) 1971, 184-199.

82 J. Deschner, 'Unity of Humankind', *DEM*, 1046.

83 Houtepen describes this study-programme as follows: "What in the WCC programme since 1966 was no longer a question – credible witness demands a call on solidarity with people in need and on diaconal action among Christians – remained in Faith and Order a fairly narrow track which also in the study concerning the Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community hardly came out clearly", Hoedemaker/Houtepen/Witvliet, *Oecumene als leerproces*, 263-264.

was oriented both on the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople and on new ways of contemporary confessing, most attention was paid to the diachronic process of (re-)interpretation of the early creed⁸⁴. Thus the synchronic task of Bangalore was more or less suspended⁸⁵.

Of course, the gradual shift from ecclesiology in a wider perspective to ecclesiology as related to the internal features of the church, has everything to do with the way the work of Faith and Order has been received. The overwhelming number of reactions to the *Lima-report* has shown that the direction of the work of the multilateral dialogue is to a large extent determined by the reception by the member-churches. The problems that were faced in the Unity of the Church - Unity of Mankind programme precisely pertain to those elements that perhaps were/are more reason for separation between the churches than the traditional religious convictions⁸⁶, whereas convergences in the area of internal ecclesiology have looked more promising. The optimism about the possibilities of transformation and progress of the world and the major role the church should play in this revolutionary or at least evolutionary process has faded away, in particular in the western world. Yet, the pendulum has been swinging back again, since the churches, reacting on the *Lima-report*, have asked for a profound study on ecclesiology, its tasks, the nature of how it understands itself, its witness etc., in which baptism, eucharist and ministry, faith and apostolic life have their place. The umbrella concept of *koinonia* is considered to entail both the diachronic and synchronic approaches which have been part of the Faith and Order movement from the beginning.

In the bilateral dialogues the developments in ecclesiology as a theme bear some resemblance to those in the multilateral dialogue. However, the fact that the main number of the bilateral dialogues started only in the 1960s or later and the common opinion on their specific task within the ecumenical movement make these developments less diverse. The concern of Faith and Order for ecclesiology related to the unity/renewal of humanity has been, to a large extent, the result of the developments in church and world during the 1960s. It is a paradox that in the bilateral dialogues, being basically the result of these developments (in particular, though not exclusively, because of the increasing openness of the Roman Catholic Church that resulted in and were the result of the Second Vatican Council), this concern for ecclesiology in relation to the world is, to a large extent, absent. The concentration on inner features of ecclesiology in the bilateral dialogues seems to anticipate a similar development in Faith and Order during the 1970s. From its early days ecclesiology in the bilateral dialogues has mainly been related to, what Emmanuel Lanne called the 'classical theme' of the conversations, namely baptism, eucharist and ministry⁸⁷ and other issues like creeds and confessions, and Scripture and tradition. Questions about church and world, part of the Faith and Order programme (though occasionally in a background position), never got similar attention within the bilateral dialogues. The growing resemblance between what was considered to be the main points of dissensus and divergence has mainly been limited to internal ecclesiological matters⁸⁸.

84 Cf. *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, Faith and Order Paper 154, Geneva (WCC) 1992.

85 "Up to now there is hardly any bilateral dialogue about this and in the multilateral dialogue in Faith and Order the beginnings in Bangalore - A Common Account of Hope – were not followed up. This is the result of the inherited backward-looking hermeneutics...", A. Houtepen, 'Ökumenische Hermeneutik: Auf der Suche nach Kriterien der Kohärenz im Christentum', *ÖR* 39/1 (1990) 288.

86 Nowadays, perhaps there is more truth in the opposite of the famous and controversial statement of Life and Work in its early days that 'doctrine divides while service unites'; cf. Hoedemaker/Houtepen/Witvliet, *Oecumene als leerproces*, 243. The ARCIC dialogue is one the first of the bilateral dialogues to make a shift to discuss ethical issues on the way to unity.

87 Lanne, 'Two Decades of Bilateral Conversations', 311, paper presented at the Fourth Forum on Bilateral Conversations, Bossey Switzerland, 1985.

88 This does not mean that the world *extra ecclesiam* is entirely absent from the dialogues. Many of them

Thus, ecclesiology is regarded to be the prevailing theme in the bilateral ecumenical and multilateral dialogues of today whereby *koinonia* is considered to be most suitable concept to cover the different *Anliegen* in the ecumenical process.

1.4 Is Soteriology a Theme in its Own Right?

Having pictured the development of the themes in the ecumenical dialogue the question arises whether soteriology as a theme in its own right plays a role in the ecumenical dialogues. This question cannot be answered fully in the affirmative insofar as there are only a few dialogues that have soteriology as their explicit theme.

As far as the multilateral dialogues are concerned, the Second World Conference on Faith and Order in Edinburgh 1937 has been the only multilateral meeting that was for a substantial part devoted to soteriology. During the preparation time the theme 'Doctrine of Grace' was regarded to be one of "these great fundamental questions" that "have divided the Churches on the matters of both Faith and Order"⁸⁹. In fact, the question here was a re-thinking of the 16th-century controversy between Rome and Reformation and its continuing impact on church divisions since that time. In section I of the final report, called 'The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ', the impetus was given to a convergence in the area of justification/sanctification; the sovereignty of God and the human response; the relation between church and grace; the relation between grace, the word and the sacraments; and the interpretation of the expression *sola gratia*⁹⁰. God's sovereign action and human responsibility were characterized not as mutually excluding alternatives but as belonging to the one process of salvation⁹¹. I will come back to this later on in this chapter.

Afterwards soteriology would never get this explicit attention in the Faith and Order programme again. Of course, the christocentric approach after World War II was connected to the soteriological impact of the Christ event. In Lund 1952 and later, the christocentric approach of ecclesiology did not mean a concentration on the person of Christ apart from or over against his work - in the way christology and soteriology are sometimes distinguished or separated. But the fundamental point was the Lordship of Christ over his church through his life, death and resurrection as God's own Son⁹². Thus, christology was the point of reference in the ecumenical debate. Afterwards, the growing attention to the relation between church and world (synchronic approach) had everything to do with the emerging belief that God's salvation is not limited to the realm of the church or the individual believer and that the church has to play a role in the world⁹³.

summon their readers to express our common faith in contemporary language, and efforts are made to relate the understanding of BEM to their meaning for today's world, in particular their ethical significance. Nevertheless, the relation between church and world is generally not a theme as such.

89 According to the 1931 report of the Theological Committee appointed by the Continuation Committee of the Faith and Order Movement as a preparation meeting for Edinburgh; in: W.T. Whitley (ed), *The Doctrine of Grace*, London (SCM Press) 1932, 3.

90 Edinburgh 1937, Final Report in: Vischer (ed), *Documentary History 1927-1963*, 40-43.

91 "In regard to the relation of God's grace and man's freedom, we all agree simply on the basis of Holy Scripture and Christian experience that the sovereignty of God is supreme... Thus we men owe our whole salvation to His gracious will. But, on the other hand, it is the will of God that His grace should be actively appropriated by man's own will and that for such decision man should remain responsible", Edinburgh 1937, Final Report in: Vischer (ed), *Documentary History 1927-1963*, 4.

92 "We believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, who loved the Church and gave himself for it, and has brought the Church into an abiding union with himself", Lund 1952, Final Report in: Vischer (ed), *Documentary History 1927-1963*, 87.

93 Cf. the Faith and Order programme: Unity of the Church and Unity of Mankind/the Renewal of Human

Nevertheless, soteriology itself, as a church dividing issue under discussion at the Edinburgh conference, remained in the background.

In the bilateral dialogues soteriology as a specific subject has got more attention than in the multilateral dialogue of Faith and Order. The most important reason for this is the prevailing diachronic approach in the bilateral dialogues compared to the more synchronic approach of the multilateral dialogues. As I said before, bilateral dialogues are much more interested in working out solutions to historical problems that once caused and are thought to cause disagreement and separation nowadays than multilateral dialogues are. In the Western tradition one of those problems has been the concept of salvation. It is a fundamental question, according to Edinburgh, that goes back to the 16th century and still causes separation⁹⁴. It is therefore little wonder that the participants in the bilateral dialogues that pay attention to soteriology as a dividing issue belong to the mainstream churches from the West. Generally spoken soteriology is an explicit topic in the dialogues between the Roman Catholic Church and churches stemming from the Reformation. 'Explicit' means that differences in soteriology that are assumed to belong to a certain confession are under discussion. So we see soteriology as an explicit theme in certain phases of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, the Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue, the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue and the Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue. Furthermore soteriology plays a role in the Methodist-Reformed dialogue and the Lutheran-Methodist dialogue. The Orthodox-Old Catholic dialogue has a more or less extraordinary position in this group. The concern for soteriology in this dialogue is not a particular interest in the issue as church dividing, but part of a dialogue that pays attention to all the essentials of the Christian faith, namely: the doctrine of God; christology; ecclesiology, soteriology; sacramental doctrine; eschatology; and ecclesial communion⁹⁵.

Given the total number of dialogues, however, it is clear that in general soteriology is a theme on the sidelines of the bilateral playing field, like it is in the multilateral dialogue. Only a limited number of ecumenical dialogues pays attention to this particular part of the theological spectrum. The bulk of the dialogues is involved in a discussion on the traditional issues of baptism, eucharist and ministry, under the umbrella of ecclesiology, very often related to the church considered as *koinonia*.

Stating that soteriology is not very often an explicit theme in the dialogues implies the question whether it is an implicit theme and how. In what sense do the ecumenical dialogues speak about salvation? The soteriological intention of the Christian faith is one of its essential characteristics.

Community.

94 The reason that the multilateral dialogue of Faith and Order in Edinburgh as a *World Conference* paid so much attention to this Western debate could be attributed to the fact that despite the presence of Orthodox theologians the ecumenical movement was mainly a Western movement at that time. The reactions on Section I of the Edinburgh report (*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*) show that the roots of the section on grace lay in the 16th century debate between Rome and Reformation. The Orthodox participant explicitly refers to the question as a Western problem. The intensity of the reaction on the section report of the Lutheran participant Anders Nygren shows more involvement: "As a rule I am very suspicious of formulae devised to unity. The majority of such formulae are compromises, merely concealing disagreements which still persist (...) We Lutherans are very sensitive where right belief is concerned... We may not sacrifice anything of the truth clearly seen in order more easily to achieve unity with other churches" (121). He continues positively: "The result goes to prove that we can, in actual fact, as the Church of Christ, speak with one voice about the deepest things in Christianity" (122), L. Hodgson (ed), *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order, Edinburgh, August 3-18, 1937*, London (SCM Press) 1938, 121-122.

95 Cf. Urs von Arx (ed), *Koinonia auf altkirchlicher Basis: Deutsche Gesamtausgabe der gemeinsamen Texte des orthodox-alkatolischen Dialogs 1975-1987 mit französischer und englischer Übersetzung*, Beiheft zur IKZ 4, Bern 1989.

Central is Jesus Christ, as the *proprium* of Christianity. The reason for the apostles and those who followed them to believe in Jesus as the Christ and to be the church was the fundamental experience of the salvific meaning he had, in one way or another, for their existence. Their interest was not primarily christological as such. It is, for example, quite often asserted that from its beginning the church has resisted from declaring one of the interpretations of salvation of the New Testament or of the early church itself as normative⁹⁶. From this, it is sometimes concluded that soteriology did not play an important role in the early church and that most attention was drawn by the christological question. However, it is clear that the primary interest of the christological debate was not the doctrine of the two natures itself but its soteriological relevance⁹⁷. Only when Jesus is the Christ are we saved. He is, nevertheless, only the Christ when he is both human and divine. The same applies to the trinitarian debate in the East and explicitly to the question of the appropriation of salvation in the West: both had/have a soteriological intention. Differences that were/are the reason for Christians to initiate a new confession should concern in one way or another - from a theological point of view, not from an empirical point of view – the question of salvation. If not, there is not a legitimate reason to continue separation. If a certain way of thinking or acting is regarded as concealing, diminishing or even hindering the message that God's purpose in Jesus Christ is salvation for the world, this has led to separation. Division concerns "the understanding and the perception of 'salvation', of God's initiative of grace in the history of humanity, as taken from the faith of Israel and from the message and praxis of Jesus"⁹⁸.

As we said before, in the present study we will analyse the way some ecumenical dialogues explicitly speak about salvation. Here it is important to note what has already been done in this field. We already mentioned the book of A. Birmelé *Le salut en Jésus Christ dans les dialogues oecuméniques*. Birmelé has given a profound analysis of the question of soteriology in the ecumenical dialogues. He deals with the issue of what in ecumenical circles is called the problem of 'fundamental differences'⁹⁹. Could it be that behind the individual differences and disagreements soteriology plays an important role as (one of the) elemental problem(s) within the ecumenical dialogue? Is there a fundamental difference, a root cause, a basic reason which causes, clarifies and justifies the visible and individual differences between the churches and within the churches and is it soteriology? In the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, according to Meyer, the search for a 'fundamental difference' became rather popular in

96 Cf. Greshake, *Gottes Heil*, 50

97 Cf. Walter Lowe, 'Christ and Salvation' in: P.C. Hodgson/R. King (ed), *Christian Theology: An Introduction to its Traditions and Tasks*, Cambridge (SPCK) 1983, 196: "Historically, this reflection (= christology, RL) has not been a merely theoretical matter. The effort has been informed by the keenest of human interest - the interest in salvation. It is therefore fitting that soteriology (...) be considered at the same time as Christology". P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, London (Nisbet and Co.) 1957, 174: "Christology is a function of soteriology. The problem of soteriology creates the christological question and gives direction to the christological answer".

98 A.W.J. Houtepen, 'Naar een gemeenschappelijk verstaan van doop, eucharistie en ambt', *TvT* 24/3 (1984) 248.

99 Birmelé, *Le salut*, 277-315; cf. also H. Meyer, 'Fundamental Difference - Fundamental Consensus', *MS* 25/3 (1986) 247-259; H.J. Urban/H. Wagner (ed), *Handbuch der Ökumenik*, 3/1, Paderborn 1987, 195-260; A. Birmelé/H. Meyer (ed), *Grundkonsens - Grunddifferenz: Studie Des Straßburger Instituts für Ökumenische Forschung. Ergebnisse und Dokumente*, Frankfurt am Main-Paderborn (Lembeck/Bonifatius) 1992; Georg Hintzen, 'Wo liegt die Evangelisch-Katholische Grunddifferenz? Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der These des Comité mixte catholique-protestant en France', *Catholica* 42/4 (1988) 274-303; W. Beinert, 'Konfessionelle Grunddifferenz: Ein Beitrag zur ökumenischen Epistemologie (II)', *Catholica* 34 (1980) 36-61, cf. the extended bibliography in note 10. Cf. also M. Hietamäki, *Agreeable Agreement: An Examination of the Quest for Consensus in Ecumenical Dialogue*, New York (T&T Clark) 2010 for a general survey of the issue of consensus.

explaining the individual differences between the churches (*Konfessionskunde*)¹⁰⁰. What was discerned as a fundamental difference legitimized the existing situation of separation¹⁰¹. Recent ecumenical research has tried to re-evaluate the issue of 'fundamental difference', not as legitimization, but as a reaction to the fact that ecumenical achievements, in particular in the field of the dialogues, has not resulted in concrete steps to unity yet. It is asked whether the ecumenical dialogues have not fought some outward symptoms instead of the real malady and whether it is time to search for the real dividing issues. At a conference of the Institute for Ecumenical Research (Strasbourg) in Nizza 1989 theologians of different confessions (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Reformed, Methodist, Lutheran) made the attempt to localize what, in their view, was the core of the difference between the Roman Catholic Church and the churches of the Reformation¹⁰². They agreed that the fundamental difference was to be located in the "determination of the relation between the divine and the human in the *Heilsgeschehen*"¹⁰³. There is, on the basis of the results of the ecumenical dialogues, agreement on the understanding of salvation as God's action once and for all in Jesus' cross and resurrection as a gift for humanity. The human being who lives under God's grace becomes his co-operator not in the salvific act itself, but in what surrounds this act and its consequences¹⁰⁴. Hence the fundamental difference is to be found in the nature of the relationship between God and the human being in the surroundings and the follow-up of what is indisputably seen as God's salvific initiative towards humanity¹⁰⁵. Some were inclined to assign a rather constitutive role to the human being, whereas others wanted to lay all the emphasis on the insignificance or even absence of his/her role. This distinction, however, was said not to be absolute and therefore not identical with a particular confession. It is rather a matter of tendencies: although in the Roman Catholic tradition the constitutive role of the human being plays a more important role than in the churches of the Reformation, both tendencies are present in any of these traditions and within one and the same tradition¹⁰⁶. The effect of this more or less implicit fundamental difference on the relation between the work of God and the work of the human being explicitly emerges in many divergences and disagreements in the dialogues. The ecumenical problem is that these tendencies and their consequences at the ecumenical surface are occasionally regarded as church dividing, whereas the borderline between both tendencies is rather blurred. In other words: the perception of the role of the human being in the appropriation of his/her salvation is regarded to be the root cause for many of the problems between the churches of the West, but these problems do not

100 Meyer, 'Fundamental Difference - Fundamental Consensus', *MS* 25/3 (1986) 249; cf. also Peter Neuner's reference to Von Harnack, Loisy and Troeltsch in: 'Lokalisierungsversuch einer möglichen Grunddifferenz: Stellungnahmen einzelner Theologen' in: Birmelé/Meyer, *Grundkonsens - Grunddifferenz*, 236-237; and Beinert, 'Konfessionelle Grunddifferenz', 39-47.

101 The risk of *Konfessionskunde* has always been that the confession itself is the only stable factor, whereas the reasons that are supposed to legitimize the borderlines over against the other tradition change time and again and depend on the theologian and his/her time.

102 A. Birmelé, 'Sinn und Gefahr der Rede von einer Grunddifferenz: Bericht und Reflexionen über eine Konsultation und ihr Thema' in: Birmelé/Meyer (ed), *Grundkonsens - Grunddifferenz*, 181-192.

103 "... daß die Grunddifferenz in der *Bestimmung* des Verhältnisses von Göttlichem und Menschlichem im Heilsgeschehen ihren Ort hat", Birmelé, 'Sinn und Gefahr der Rede von einer Grunddifferenz' in: Birmelé/Meyer (ed), *Grundkonsens - Grunddifferenz*, 184.

104 "Salvation is the gift of God to man. The man or woman living under the grace of God becomes God's assistant, not in the action itself which grants salvation, but in whatever surrounds this action and the consequences it has", Birmelé, 'Sinn und Gefahr der Rede von einer Grunddifferenz' in: Birmelé/Meyer (ed), *Grundkonsens - Grunddifferenz*, 184.

105 The terminology of 'surroundings' and 'consequences' is rather vague and unclear and not elaborated. In a sense, their function is more negative than affirmative insofar as they try to safeguard the fundamental content of the agreement, which is the initiative of God in the salvific event.

106 It is noteworthy to say that it is not made clear in what sense the constitutive role of the human being is more important in the Roman Catholic tradition or less important in the churches of the Reformation. No examples are given, nor further argumentation.

automatically go along the confessional lines of the different traditions involved in the ecumenical dialogue. Meyer calls the nature of this perception *meta-dogmatic*, which means that there is not one particular theological point from which the fundamental difference derives¹⁰⁷. It is like circling over the theological landscape and although the position from which one looks at the scene below changes all the time, the landscape is still the same; which means that whatever theological subject (in particular ecclesiology, christology, anthropology, soteriology, according to Meyer) is under discussion, the very problem of the relation between God's activity and that of the human being will emerge at some stage.

The reflection, however, on this relationship belongs, in our opinion, to the field of soteriology, despite its meta-dogmatic character, and the title of Birmelé's study implies the same. Soteriology is likely to be the primary field where the relationship between God and humanity in the *Heilsgeschehen* is at stake, which does not mean that reflection on this relationship is the only content of soteriology. Soteriology is not only about the way human beings profit from the salvation made available in Christ, the appropriation, but also about what salvation actually means in a particular situation, its content and the role of Jesus Christ in it.

If soteriology is a theme in some ecumenical dialogues by way of the continuously recurring question how God and the human being do relate to each other, this is indeed not limited to soteriology as *locus* of theology, as explicit theme in the dialogues. It appears in ecclesiology, baptism, eucharist and ministry, the themes that are so dominant in the ecumenical debate, but also in their related subjects like anthropology, christology, pneumatology etc. They do not exist as such, separated and isolated, but they are in one way or another related to the salvific intention of the Christian faith¹⁰⁸ and the way God and human beings play a role in the appropriation of salvation. It is this implicit soteriology that is said to have caused a substantial part of the differences between the churches of the Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church. Precisely the relationship between God and humanity in the *Heilsgeschehen* seems to be the dividing issue in this part of the ecumenical dialogue. Hence, in a sense soteriology as an implicit theme plays a fundamental role in ecumenical dialogues, but mainly as a question regarding the appropriation of salvation, how God and the human play a role in the *Heilsgeschehen*. Therefore we will broaden the theme of soteriology in the coming analysis, because the appropriation of salvation is an important part of soteriology, but not its only content. Moreover, it is important to include the contribution of the Orthodox churches in the debate, because their view on salvation differs from the western view, in particular because the question of appropriation as a church-dividing problem is absent in the Eastern theology. So in the next chapter we will analyse and evaluate some ecumenical dialogues with regard to their soteriological content.

But first we will go back to the 1937 Edinburgh conference, because, despite the limited impact of the dialogue, one could already find there in broad lines the systematics of the later bilateral dialogues dealing with soteriology, be it explicitly or implicitly.

107 Cf. H. Meyer's attempt at localization of the fundamental difference in: 'Lokalisierungsversuch einer möglichen Grunddifferenz: Stellungnahmen einzelner Theologen' in: Birmelé/Meyer, *Grundkonsens - Grunddifferenz*, 232.

108 Cf. W. Beinert's contribution to localize the fundamental difference in: 'Lokalisierungsversuch einer möglichen Grunddifferenz: Stellungnahmen einzelner Theologen' in: Birmelé/Meyer, *Grundkonsens - Grunddifferenz*, 194.

1.5 What Happened Before: Edinburgh 1937. The World Conference on Faith and Order: *The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ*.

In Lausanne 1927, at the first Faith and Order conference, a Continuation Committee was appointed to supervise the reception process¹⁰⁹ and to make preparations for a follow-up. When Charles Brent, who presided over the Committee, died William Temple, archbishop of York, became chairman in 1929. In the same year a Theological Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Arthur Headlam to study the problems that came up during the reception process. In some of their reactions Protestant churches referred to the issues of grace and justification. An ecumenical discussion on these issues would serve the dialogue on the matters discussed in Lausanne¹¹⁰. The Theological Committee began by studying the doctrine of grace which resulted in the publication of a report called *The Theology of Grace*¹¹¹. This report would serve as the basis of section one of the 1937 Edinburgh report, called *The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ*¹¹². In preparation of the conference churches were asked to comment on the report. Some churches from the continent were not satisfied with *The Theology of Grace*. It was felt that the Committee "seemed to have arrived at agreement too easily and not to have done justice to some of the central teaching of the Reformation"¹¹³. This resulted in a continuing discussion within the churches, within the Theological Committee and during the 1937 Conference. On August 17th the Conference finally approved the text of *The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (chapter II of the Conference Report) *nemine contradicente*¹¹⁴.

Besides grace as a theme the participants, representing 122 mainly Western churches (the Roman Catholic Church was not present)¹¹⁵, discussed four other themes in three different sections: (1) The Church of Christ and the Word of God; (2) The Communion of Saints¹¹⁶; (3) The Church of Christ: Ministry and Sacraments; (4) The Church's Unity in Life and Worship.

The final report consists of six chapters, an introduction followed by five statements dealing with the themes mentioned above¹¹⁷. The first statement, *The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, is divided into six parts: (i) The Meaning of Grace; (ii) Justification and Sanctification; (iii) The Sovereignty of God and Man's Response; (iv) The Church and Grace; (v) Grace, the Word and the Sacraments; and (vi) Sola Gratia.

The report starts by presenting the agreement that "there is in connection with this subject no

109 Cf. Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 5.

110 In its reaction the Presbyterian church of England declared that differences in doctrine and practice, especially in relationship to Ministry and Sacraments demanded more profound discussion. "The fact that these differences, though they manifest themselves rather on the surface of Church life, in administration and in worship, do really go very deep, and spring ultimately from different ways of apprehending such central ideas as Faith and Grace, if not ultimately from different conceptions of God", L. Hodgson, (ed), *Convictions: A Selection from the Responses of the Churches to the Report of the World Conference on Faith and Order, Held at Lausanne in 1927*, London (SCM Press) 1934, 91. Cf. also the reactions of e.g. the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (82), The German Committee representing the German (Lutheran/Evangelical) churches (141), the (Lutheran) Church of Norway (149), the (Lutheran) Church of Sweden (155), the United Lutheran Church in America (166).

111 'The Theology of Grace: Report of the Theological Committee Appointed by the Continuation Committee of the Faith and Order Movement, to that Committee at High Leigh on 19th August 1931' in: W.T. Whitley (ed), *The Doctrine of Grace*, London (SCM Press) 1932, 3-28.

112 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 219-276.

113 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 8.

114 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 170.

115 Only 21 Orthodox, 7 Eastern Orthodox, 4 Old Catholics took part on a total of 443 delegates such as Anglicans (94), Baptists, Congregationalists, Disciples, Friends, Lutherans, Mennonites, Methodists, Reformed (106), Reformed Catholics and United.

116 The theme 'The Communion of Saints' was added by section IV (Church's Unity in Life and Worship) because it was considered to be "so clearly a theme standing in its own right", Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 144.

117 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 219-276. Since the practical custom of dividing ecumenical texts in paragraphs began at a later date we will refer to the pages of Hodgson's book and in brackets to the division made by L. Vischer in his *Documentary History 1927-1963*, 40-74.

ground for maintaining division between Churches"¹¹⁸. As the title of the statement shows, this agreement is predominantly, though not exclusively, founded on a christological interpretation of God's gracious turning towards humankind against a trinitarian background. Fundamental is God's love as the actual moving force from which grace flows and so God fulfils in love his righteous purposes through grace. This grace is revealed in particular, but not exclusively, in Jesus Christ: "When we speak of God's grace, we think of God Himself as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ"¹¹⁹. God's grace is also manifested in creation, preservation and all the blessings of life, "but above all in our redemption through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in the sending of the holy and life-giving Spirit, in the fellowship of the Church and in the gift of the Word and Sacraments"¹²⁰.

The report tries to do justice to God's overall gracious purposes for the world¹²¹ and to the particularity of God's gracious manifestations in Christ, Spirit, church, word and sacraments. The change of the title of the report from 'the grace of God' into 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ', which as an expression is a *Fremdkörper* in the text¹²², shows the two lines of thought throughout this section. Nevertheless, it leaves out further comment on the general purposes, and concentrates on the christological interpretation of God's grace: our redemption is manifested "above all" in the soteriological events of Christ's life, death and resurrection. Thus the report avoids talking about grace in terms of *gratia creata*, *gratia infusa*, *gratia imputata*, as an effect or an attribute of God, but it personalizes and historizes grace in the person of Jesus Christ. He does not fulfil a task at the service of grace, but as a person he is grace.

The report does not pay specific attention to the question who is the object of God's grace. It

118 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 224 (§ 1). It is interesting to read, for example, the reaction of the Church of Scotland: "no passage in the Report will be read with more satisfaction than the agreed statement which deals with the all-important topic of 'The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ' (...) Nothing could be more hopeful", *Statements Received from Churches on the Report of the Edinburgh Conference: First Series*, Faith and Order Paper 93 (first series), Oxford/New York 1939.

119 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 224 (§ 2).

120 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 224 (§ 2).

121 See, for example, the last sentence of 'The Meaning of Grace' (§ 3): "Man's salvation and welfare have their source in God alone, who is moved to His gracious activity towards man not by any merit on man's part, but solely by His free, outgoing love" which can be explained as God's act that is not exclusively related to his revelation in Christ. Cf. D. Quatannens, *De Oecumenische Kontrovers inzake de Genade op de Tweede Wereldvergadering voor Geloof en Kerkorde gehouden te Edinburgh van 3-18 augustus 1937: Weergave en Beoordeling*, Brussel 1961, 99.

122 Cf. Quatannens, *De Oecumenische Kontrovers inzake de Genade*, 27-76. He describes the process that led to the transformation of the title of section I from 'The Theology of Grace' into 'The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ'. The terminology of the title, 'The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ', is not familiar to the section itself which speaks of the grace of God and never of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Quatannens considers the change not as a theological one. The new title was introduced without further discussion (56) during the secretariat of the Continuation Committee of Canon L. Hodgson, before the Edinburgh conference and before the discussion in the local groups (52). Quatannens does not pay attention to the fact that not only the title of section I was 'christologized', but also the other sections. At the 1934 meeting of the Continuation Committee at Hertenstein (Switzerland) the programme of the coming World Conference was presented as follows: Its general subject was called 'The Church in the Purpose of God' sub-divided in: I The Church and the Word; II The Church and the World; III The Meaning of Grace; and IV The Church's Fellowship in Life and Worship (*World Conference on Faith and Order: The 1934 Meeting of the Continuation Committee held at Hertenstein, Switzerland, September 3-6*, Faith and Order Paper 71 [first series] Winchester/New York s.a., 10). In the programme of the Edinburgh Conference, however, three themes out of four sections are related to Christ: I The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; II The Church of Christ and the Word of God; III The Church of Christ: Ministry and Sacraments; IV The Church's Unity in Life and Worship. Moreover, the Affirmation of Union in Allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ shows a similar christological development (*World Conference on Faith and Order: Programme for the Second World Conference on Faith and Order to be held at Edinburgh, Scotland, August 3-18, 1937*, Faith and Order Paper 74 [first series], Winchester/New York 1935, 8).

speaks of 'man(kind)', the 'world' and 'us'/'our' without indicating in what sense 'man(kind)', the 'world' or 'we' are objects of God's grace. The report speaks in terms of God who has manifested his love to sinners¹²³, but it is not elaborated what their sins are and why they are in need of salvation.

If we look at the soteriological concepts present in this chapter justification and sanctification¹²⁴ are the most important ones. They are christologically oriented.

God in his free outgoing love justifies and sanctifies us through Christ, and His grace thus manifested is appropriated by faith, which itself is the gift of God¹²⁵.

Both justification and sanctification are regarded as two distinctive aspects of the one salvific initiative of God through Christ towards humankind; in the words of the report: "two inseparable aspects of God's gracious action in dealing with sinful man"¹²⁶; distinguished but inseparable.

Justification is the act of God forgiving our sins. The report goes beyond a purely outward interpretation by stating that at the same time justification brings us into fellowship with God. The *extra hominem* of salvation is emphasized, but the *negativum* of justification, forgiveness of sins, is complemented with the idea of communion with God. Justification is not just the restoration of a former situation but the creation of a new situation, *koinonia* with God. Jesus' death on the cross is explicitly mentioned as the paramount event that leads to the condemnation of sin and the manifestation of God's love. Jesus' life and resurrection are omitted as relevant occurrences for our justification. The end of justification is not only the individual but is oriented on the reconciliation of the world to God.

Sanctification is part of the same work of God. In the same way as justification is not only God's work *extra hominem*, similarly sanctification is not only human's work *extra Deum*. Both are aspects of God's grace. Several times it is emphasized that

Sanctification is the work of God, whereby through the Holy Spirit He continually renews us and the whole Church... This renewal remains throughout the gift of God. Whatever our growth in holiness may be, our fellowship with God is always based upon God's forgiving grace¹²⁷.

Thus the aspect of growth in sanctification and its process-like character is not regarded as the work of the human being over against God's act of justification but it continues to be God's work through the Holy Spirit¹²⁸. He is active in personal renewal and that of the church; in deliverance from the power of sin (singular; not forgiveness of sins as in justification), growth in holiness, and transformation into the likeness of the Son, through participation in His death and risen life. Here, the meaning of Jesus' death is different from that in the justification perspective, because it has a positive meaning for the believer who participates in Jesus' death and resurrection.

123 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225 (§ 6).

124 In the Report of the Theological Committee the section on Justification and Sanctification as it was called in the Conclusions (page 25), was discussed under the title 'The Meaning of Justification' in the preceding section of the Report, called 'Discussion of Particular Problems'; 'The Theology of Grace' in: Whitley, *The Doctrine of Grace*, 18-19.

125 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 224 (§ 4).

126 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 224 (§ 5).

127 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225 (§ 7)

128 Notice the difference in understanding justification as an *act* of God (momentous) and sanctification as his *work* (implies duration); Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225 (§ 6.7).

The emphasis on justification and sanctification as two sides of the one action of God is an attempt to transcend the problem of the relation between God and the human being with regard to salvation, in particular the human involvement in the appropriation of God's grace. The problem to what extent the human being contributes to or co-operates in his/her own salvation and whether a possible human contribution or co-operation devalues God's sovereignty is tackled, but not solved. The report draws two lines that are considered to be essential for the understanding of the relationship between God and the human being. On the one hand it lays all emphasis on the initiative of God, a universal¹²⁹ initiative of grace which flows from his love¹³⁰. God in his sovereignty, "his all-controlling, all-embracing will and purpose" revealed himself in Christ "for each man and for all mankind"¹³¹. No one is excluded beforehand from God's salvific will but at the same time no one can claim his/her salvation "by any merit on man's part"¹³²: "We men owe our whole salvation to his gracious will"¹³³. That the initiative belongs to God, applies to 'faith' as well. Faith itself is a gift of God¹³⁴. On the other hand, the report tries to leave room for responsibility on the human side. Faith is not only a gift of God, but also whole-hearted trust in God and committal of ourselves to Jesus Christ¹³⁵. It is God's will that "His grace should be actively appropriated by man's own will and that for such a decision man should remain responsible"¹³⁶. No one is excluded beforehand, but the human being has a certain responsibility in the appropriation of grace. God's grace can be resisted and in this way Edinburgh excludes a double predestination which would have concluded that God elects people for salvation and damnation without the involvement of human will. There are no attempts to solve this antithesis. The statement that

many theologians have made attempts on philosophical lines to reconcile the apparent antithesis of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, but such theories are not part of the Christian Faith¹³⁷

puts a rather surprising and abrupt end to this discussion. In the presentation of the report it is clarified that there is room to philosophize about this question. However, this belongs to

commentary rather than to faith. In the *personal* relations between God and man the antinomy is surmounted. There is room for differences of opinion in attempts to philosophise, but if we confess that

129 Cf. the phrase "reconciling the world to Himself" (Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225 [§ 6]) which was added to the 1931 report of the Theological Committee.

130 "We wish further to insist that this eternal purpose is the expression of God's own loving and holy nature", Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225 (§ 9). This is in line with the understanding of God as Love in the first section: "man's salvation and welfare have their source in God alone, who is moved to His gracious activity towards man not by any merit on man's part, but solely by His free, outgoing love", Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 224 (§ 3).

131 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225 (§ 9). It is interesting that the Theological Committee in 1931 called the third section Predestination and Freewill although these terms are not used in the text itself. At that time the Committee was already convinced "that the term 'Sovereignty of God' would express the religious belief better than terms such as 'predestination' and 'election, which had associations that had better be avoided, and it was felt that the term 'responsibility of man' was better than 'freewill'" ('The Theology of Grace' in: Whitley (ed), *The Doctrine of Grace*, 20). The 1937 report calls the same section, according to the content of the text, The Sovereignty of God and Man's Response. Cf. also Quatannens, *De Oecumenische Kontrovers inzake de Genade*, 301-366. He interprets the change from predestination into sovereignty as a clarification of the essential meaning of Edinburgh, namely that by predestination is meant God's sovereignty, the *prae* of God and his grace.

132 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 224 (§ 3).

133 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225 (§ 9).

134 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 224.

135 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225.

136 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225.

137 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225 (§ 10).

we owe our whole salvation to God's gracious will, and if we acknowledge it to be the will of God that decision should rest on man's will, then we can leave philosophical questions aside¹³⁸.

In the section on the church and grace the two aspects of God's gracious action return. The church, as Body of Christ, is "at once the realisation of God's gracious purposes in creation and redemption, and the continuous organ of God's grace in Christ by the Holy Spirit"¹³⁹. It is both result of and instrument for God's grace, always as a consequence of God's initiative, similar to the relation between justification and sanctification for the individual. The relation between Word and Sacraments is sketched in a similar way. Like the church, the sacraments as gift of God's grace are primarily interpreted christologically. Both Word and Sacrament are gifts of God through Jesus Christ for the salvation of humankind. It is, nevertheless, worth noting that the Word tends to be seen to belong to the domain of justification and the Sacraments to sanctification. The Word reveals, calls and forgives, and draws to obedience. It is a more outward act, whereas the Sacraments, as Sacraments of the Church, "have their significance in the continual working of the Holy Spirit"¹⁴⁰, through which God "develops in all its members a life of perpetual communion lived within its fellowship"¹⁴¹. In the same way as sanctification means inspiration to spiritual activity and conflict with evil, so the sacraments enable us to embody God's will in the life of the world.

At the end of Section I the relation between God and human being in salvation returns once more in the explanation of the expression *sola gratia*. In a way this paragraph is a summary of the whole report. It says that there is some difference of opinion on the use of the expression *sola gratia*: "some Churches set great value on the expression *sola gratia*, while others avoid it"¹⁴². It is not elaborated what are the reasons for this difference of opinion, but it certainly has to do with the controversy on the relation between God and the human being in the appropriation of salvation¹⁴³. Edinburgh does not pay attention to the historical aspects of this question, and avoids discussion about its philosophical aspects as well. It lays all emphasis on what can be agreed on in the realm of faith, apart from the (historical) controversy and from the terminological discussion and philosophical speculations that belong to it¹⁴⁴. Therefore it mentions the term *sola gratia* but does not use it at the same time. Edinburgh gives its own interpretation of the meaning of grace, which is an acceptable interpretation of the *sola gratia*. So all can agree that

138 Said W. Manson, member of the Theological Committee; Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 119. This caused G. Florovsky to say that he could not "help thinking that this unanimity is achieved at rather a high cost. He admits that "many doctrinal statements are not part of the Christian faith" but at the same time he underscores the fact that, despite the fact that e.g. Karl Barth's speculations about the predestination are not part of Christian faith, they still have an "actual influence upon devotional and spiritual life" Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 125-126.

139 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 226 (§ 12). It is interesting that the two lines, the theological and christological, which were present in the first section on the Meaning of Grace, return. There it was said that God's grace "is manifested in our creation... but above all in our redemption" (224, § 2), and here it is said that the church is the realization of God's gracious purposes in creation and the organ of God's grace in Christ.

140 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 226.

141 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 226.

142 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 227 (§ 18).

143 'The Theology of Grace' in: Whitley (ed), *The Doctrine of Grace*, 22-24.

144 Already in the section on God's sovereignty and human's response, a question was caused by Edinburgh's option for language of faith and although an explicit reference to and rejection of speculative language is absent in the last paragraph it is certainly influenced by the text of the Theological Committee which concluded on *sola gratia*: "We agree, however, that the marvel of human salvation by the Grace of God cannot be reduced to any precise intellectual calculation, and that it may be described alike as the sovereign activity of the Grace of God in Christ and as His awakening of man's spiritual powers to a life of personal freedom and responsibility", 'The Theology of Grace' in: Whitley, *The Doctrine of Grace*, 27.

salvation is the gift of God and the fruit of His grace. It is not based on the merit of man, but has its root and foundation in the forgiveness which God in his grace grants to the sinner whom He receives to sanctify him¹⁴⁵.

The initiative is entirely on God's side, both in justification (forgiveness of sins) and in sanctification. Both are effectuated by their primary cause, God's universal grace based on his love in particular in Christ. This does not override human freedom and responsibility since they do not oppose the primacy of grace but are its result: "rather, it is only as response is made by faith to divine grace that true freedom is achieved"¹⁴⁶. There seems to be some friction in the use of the term freedom which reveals the dilemma of the report. On the one hand it is said that God's grace does not override human freedom and responsibility, which implicates that there is an area in humanity where a certain autonomy reigns. Here freedom means the possibility to respond positively or negatively to God's initiative. On the other hand freedom is used not as a possibility to respond, but as a result of the response, i.e. true freedom. Here freedom is an interpretation of salvation itself; therefore it is called 'true' or 'perfect' freedom. This dilemma returns in the understanding of faith. We have seen that faith as response is not the merit of the human being, but faith, by which God's grace is appropriated, itself "is the gift of God"¹⁴⁷. Nevertheless there is a possibility, again, of resisting God's grace:

Resistance to the appeal of God's outgoing love spells, not freedom, but bondage, and perfect freedom is found only in complete conformity with the good and acceptable and perfect will of God¹⁴⁸.

Bondage, the only term in the report to describe the result of resistance to God's grace, is not the result of not receiving God's grace but of human resistance to it.

Conclusions

- (1) (2) The christological approach of *The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ* pictures Jesus as the second person of the Trinity, who, together with the Holy Spirit, plays a fundamental role in God's plan with the world. Although there is no absolute separation between God's overall gracious purposes for the world and the particularity of God's gracious manifestations in Christ, the incarnation, and particularly Jesus' death and resurrection are the most important events for God's salvific purpose. These soteriological moments, in particular Jesus' death, are closely related to the way justification and sanctification are understood. Other soteriological aspects of Jesus' life, e.g. his proclamation of the Kingdom, are not mentioned. There are hardly any Scriptural references in the entire report, and no such references in the section on the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ.
- (3) According to its own introduction the section of the Edinburgh conference comes to the far-reaching conclusion that with regard to the problem of grace there is "no ground for maintaining division between Churches". The nature of this problem concerns the relation between God and humanity in the salvation event, in particular in the appropriation of salvation. The essence of the report is the conviction that salvation is exclusively a matter of God's universal initiative towards humankind. Salvation is a

145 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 227 (§ 18).

146 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 227 (§ 18).

147 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 225 (§ 4).

148 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 227 (§ 18).

matter of God's grace and grace is a matter of God's love. The idea that salvation could be earned, as a merit on the side of humanity, is rejected. On the other hand, the report emphasizes that a response is needed and the offer of grace has to be answered. Human responsibility and freedom keep their autonomy in the action of God's grace. It remains unclear, however, what is the nature of the human response. It is explicated in terms of faith as acceptance, trust and committal. Hence, grace must be appropriated by faith. On the one hand, however, faith is a gift of God; on the other hand it is a matter of human's will and responsibility to answer to God's offer. The report avoids going deeper into this question and concludes that it is not considered to get in the way of a possible unity and leaves to theology and philosophy to think about this. Thus, the result of Edinburgh is an agreement on one of the key issues that has divided the Western churches from the Reformation era. Three times it is said that there is no ground for maintaining division between the churches or that differences of emphasis need not to be a barrier to union regarding soteriology. Despite this achievement the report has never been regarded as a major break-through. The absence of the German Lutherans and the Roman Catholic Church, two key traditions in the controversy on grace, resulted in questions about the value of the agreement, as were posed by e.g. Visser 't Hooft in his *Memoirs*¹⁴⁹.

- (4) The two prominent concepts used to characterize the manifestation of God's grace are justification and sanctification. The discussion on justification and sanctification is on their meaning and correlation, not on their place in church and theology. Justification and sanctification are regarded to be two facets of one and the same divine work. Both are the result of God's grace. Edinburgh does not show a keen interest in the relationship between what is said about salvation (as justification and sanctification) and the circumstances in which the dialogue takes place. The question whether the rather abstract approach of the report was sufficient, already arose during the process of drafting and revising the original text. During the discussions the Anglican bishop Talbot asked twice "whether anywhere in what we put out we are going to say something about the need of the world for God and for the Gospel of God, a need not to be accounted for just on the ground of human sin"¹⁵⁰. In his perspective, the context of the world around urged the conference to speak out on the agony considering the world's faith in God and its fundamental pessimism. This would not change the content of the statement; however it could widen its perspective. In particular the problem of God and human suffering should not only be explained by the concept of sin. "Sin may be, in fact is, the final tragedy; but there is a mystery of suffering"¹⁵¹. The answer of Manson to these remarks was rather formal, where he replied that they fell outside the terms of reference of Section I. "We were concerned with the meaning of the doctrine of grace within the Church and not with the difficulty we have in maintaining this doctrine in the present world"¹⁵².

149 Visser 't Hooft wrote in his *Memoirs* about Edinburgh: "I did not feel happy about the tendency to produce verbal agreements before the real differences had been thoroughly faced... We have not yet arrived at a sufficiently deep understanding of each other's positions to be able to agree substantially", W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, London/Philadelphia (SCM Press/Westminster) 1973, 75.

150 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 159.

151 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 160-161.

152 Hodgson, *The Second World Conference*, 126.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have seen that in ecumenical dialogues soteriology as a separate theme is a *rara avis* among the prevailing themes that have been discussed until today. The 1937 Edinburgh conference Faith and Order devoted time and energy to the doctrine of grace but this was not followed up. Of course, the importance of salvation in Christian faith has never been out of sight, but as a separate theme it has never been discussed again in the Faith and Order movement. In the area of mission however, and in particular in the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC, soteriology as a theme emerged during the 1960's, culminating in the 1972/3 congress and assembly in Bangkok. Their theme, *Salvation Today*, evoked a great deal of discussion about the nature of salvation and influenced the perspective of the larger ecumenical movement. We will see that in the bilateral dialogues of the early 1970's the Bangkok Assembly played a (modest) role in those discussions between the churches.

More important, however, for the development of the themes of the bilateral dialogues was the participation of the Roman Catholic Church. In the course of the 1960's the Roman Catholic Church became officially involved in the ecumenical movement. Its decision to participate in some work of the WCC without becoming a member church and the preference to set up bilateral dialogues with other churches and World Communions, next to the participation in the Faith and Order Commission, determined the nature of the subjects of the bilateral dialogues to a large extent. The self-understanding of the Roman Catholic Church in past and present times and the nature of bilateral dialogues, two churches discussing their particular issues of contention, very often led to a more historical and ecclesiological oriented framework of discussion, so that, if soteriology was discussed, this happened within this framework. Hence, soteriology became an explicit theme in some bilateral dialogues, but the nature of the soteriological quest developed in a different direction compared to that of the missionary movement.

Chapter 2

The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue

2.1 1972: *The Malta Report: The Gospel and the Church*

The international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue officially started in 1967 after two preparatory meetings of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Working Group in Strasbourg in 1965 and 1966¹⁵³. Going back to contacts between Roman Catholics and Lutheran observers during the Second Vatican Council, this dialogue has developed into one of the leading bilateral dialogues. During the Strasbourg meetings it was acknowledged that the traditional theological problems between Roman Catholics and Lutherans were still persistent, yet "through the emergence of the modern world... they now appear in different perspective"¹⁵⁴. The development of the natural and historical sciences and of modern biblical scholarship was considered as compelling the churches to deal with traditional problems and formulations in a new way. Since those days, four phases of dialogue have been completed, the last one in 2005. A fifth one is underway. The first phase took place between 1967 and 1972. The Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission¹⁵⁵, appointed by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, discussed theological questions under the general theme 'The Gospel and the Church'. Five meetings were held, respectively in Zürich¹⁵⁶ (1967) on 'Gospel and Tradition' (§ 4)¹⁵⁷; Bastad¹⁵⁸ (Sweden, 1968) on 'World and Church under the Gospel' (§ 4); Nemi¹⁵⁹ (Italy, 1969) on 'The Structures of the Church' (§ 5); and Cartigny¹⁶⁰ (Switzerland, 1970) on 'Gospel and Law - Gospel and Christian Freedom' (§ 5). At each meeting four lectures were held, usually by one of the 14 members of the commission. In Malta, 1971 (§ 6), at the commission's last meeting, the results of the discussions were brought together and evaluated. This resulted in a final report, generally called the *Malta Report*¹⁶¹. The goals of this first phase of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue are not explicitly stated in the *Malta Report*, but it is clear that in the 'early history' of modern bilateral dialogues both parties wanted to engage in dialogue for the sake of better mutual understanding. "They agreed that it is not of primary importance to look for quick solutions to practical problems but rather to enter into a comprehensive dialogue about the basic problems which both separate and unite the two churches" (§ 2).

153 'First Official Report of the Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation', *ISer* 3 (1967) 26-28.

154 'First Official Report of the Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation', *ISer* 3 (1967) 26.

155 Nowadays called Lutheran-Catholic Commission on Unity

156 Cf. 'Joint Working Groups', *ISer* 4 (1968) 4.

157 Numbers refer to paragraphs of the *Malta Report*.

158 Cf. 'Joint Working Groups', *ISer* 7/2 (1969) 6.

159 Cf. 'Joint Working Groups', *ISer* 7/2 (1969) 7.

160 Cf. 'International Dialogue', *ISer* 11/3 (1970) 18-19.

161 'Report of the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Study Commission on "The Gospel and the Church", 1972 ("Malta Report")', Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 167-189. Also published in German (pp. 7-32) and English (pp. 33-58) in: H. Meyer (ed), *Evangelium - Welt - Kirche: Schlussbericht und Referate der römisch-katholisch / evangelisch-lutherischen Studienkommission «Das Evangelium und der Kirche», 1967-1971*, Frankfurt am Main (Lembeck/Knecht) 1975. In this volume are also published, in German or English, the lectures held during the five meetings. For the German text and back-ground information of the international and USA Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the early 1970s, see: H. Meyer, *Luthertum und Katholizismus im Gespräch: Ergebnisse und Stand der katholisch/lutherischen Dialoge in den USA und auf Weltebene, Ökumenische Perspektiven* 3, Frankfurt am Main (Lembeck/Knecht) 1973. A profound theological introduction and evaluation of, among others, the *Malta Report* and subsequent international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue documents is presented by Birmelé, *Le salut*.

The document consists of a Preface, an Introduction (§ 1-13) and four chapters: (i) The Gospel and Tradition (§ 14-34); (ii) The Gospel and the World (§ 35-46); (iii) The Gospel and the Office of the Ministry in the Church (§ 47-64); and (iv) The Gospel and the Unity of the Church (§ 65-75). The first chapter starts with a reference to history (to the 16th century) and its controversy over "the right understanding of the gospel" (§ 14). Nevertheless, it is said that it is necessary to refrain from simply restating the old controversies, but to raise the problem again from the perspective of contemporary theology and ecclesiology (§ 15). Thus, a synchronic approach which takes into account the changes in history and theological methods is preferred to a mere diachronic approach which is more inclined to adhere to the "peculiar historical situations" (§ 14) at the time of the Reformation. For that reason the report uses a dynamic understanding of the gospel, which prevents the gospel from being regarded as a collection of certain timeless formulae or doctrines that can be deduced from the Bible text. Scripture, as the witness to and product of the fundamental tradition, "has a normative role for the entire tradition of the church" (§ 17), but it, nevertheless, is not the gospel as such. The gospel entirely depends on the act of God in Jesus Christ. This event is transmitted in the gospel and made present in the Holy Spirit. Thus the gospel rests on an event that creates a new reality in all kinds of situations and periods.

The interpretation of the gospel as depending on an act of God brings the report to focus on the content of this act. The heart of the gospel is constituted "by the eschatological saving act of God in Jesus' cross and resurrection" (§ 24). The salvation of the world is regarded as the heart of God's action.

What does salvation mean here? First of all, the report deals with the paradigm of justification. The "problem of the doctrine of justification" as it is called, is practically solved, when it is stated that "today... a far-reaching consensus is developing in the interpretation of justification" (§ 26). The problem itself is not explicated, but becomes clear in two affirmative remarks by Roman Catholics and Lutherans, implying that in earlier days these affirmative remarks could not have been made¹⁶².

Catholic theologians also emphasize in reference to justification that God's gift of salvation for the believer is unconditional as far as human accomplishments are concerned. Lutheran theologians emphasize that the event of justification is not limited to individual forgiveness of sins, and they do not see in it a purely external declaration of the justification of the sinner. Rather the righteousness of God actualized in the Christ event is conveyed to the sinner through the message of justification as an encompassing reality basic to the new life of the believer" (§ 26).

This means that salvation is entirely a gift of God, whereby human merits do not play a role. At the same time, an absolute forensic and individualistic concept of justification is broadened. Justification is not only the acquittal of the accused, the end of an act initiated by God, but also the beginning, the basis of a new life of the justified person.

This agreement is not to be regarded as if a four centuries-old controversy is suddenly settled. According to Meyer, the result implies an already existing consensus in modern theology on which the report is founded¹⁶³. In fact, the main interest of the dialogue is not justification itself,

¹⁶² It is not explained in what sense these implied mutual views were actually valid or not and on what level, or whether they were official theological points of view or belonged or still belong to the level of opinions, feelings or perhaps prejudices.

¹⁶³ H. Meyer, 'The Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Dialogue with Other Churches', *OiC* 17/2 (1981) 92. He describes how several Lutheran participants wanted to pay close attention to the question of justification during the discussions. The majority of the participants, however, "were in fact convinced that in view of the theological and ecumenical studies of recent years this question was not, basically, the subject of Lutheran-

but primarily the place of justification in the field of theology, or better, its place in the faith of the believer and the church. The Lutheran position is quite clear, namely that justification is the central criterion from which all teaching and preaching flow (*articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*) (§ 29). Originally justification does not have such a prime place in the Roman Catholic tradition. Nevertheless, Lutherans and Roman Catholics agree that "justification can be understood as expressing the totality of the event of salvation" (§ 27). Here justification is a concept of what the gospel is about¹⁶⁴, nevertheless a concept referring to an event which "cannot be reduced to a theological formula" (Malta § 24). Therefore, justification is to be considered as "an important interpretation of the center of the gospel" (§ 27), not *the* only exclusive interpretation¹⁶⁵. Malta explains that the New Testament debate on justification was primarily Paul's dispute with other Jewish groups on the issue whether certain conditions were necessary for the reception of salvation. And wherever this is still the case justification needs to be articulated anew in order to confirm that God's gift of salvation is unconditional¹⁶⁶. In this way justification is the core of the gospel and can function as criterion in situations where the unconditionality of salvation is in danger. However, there are situations in which the criteriological aspect of justification is not the most appropriate form to conceptualize salvation in Christ. Through this 'contextualization' Malta also wants to do justice to the plurality of the Scriptures. There are other situations which need other expressions so that

the event of salvation to which the gospel testifies can also be expressed comprehensively in other representations derived from the New Testament, such as reconciliation, freedom, redemption, new life and new creation (§ 27)¹⁶⁷.

In other words, the centre of the gospel itself, i.e. salvation in Christ as an event, is distinguished from the concept which comprehensively interprets and expresses its content or specific aspects of its content.

Apart from justification as centre and criterion of the gospel, on which Lutherans and Roman Catholics agree, the understanding of its application in the life and teaching of the church remains rather unclear. Only Lutherans explicate their position that

all traditions and institutions of the church are subject to the criterion which asks whether they are enablers of the proper proclamation of the gospel and do not obscure the unconditional character of the gift of salvation (§ 29)

Thus, in this report justification is a key paradigm. However, not because it is considered by

Roman Catholic controversy" (92).

164 Cf. the convergence of the Lutheran idea of the centre of the gospel and the Roman Catholic hierarchy of truths in Malta § 24-25.

165 "Catholics too therefore can think of justification as 'expressing the totality,' as the central though not the exclusive expression 'of the event of salvation.' It is certainly not the only one but it is 'an important interpretation of the centre of the Gospel' which the Church never may set aside.", H. Meyer, 'The Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Dialogue with Other Churches', *OiC* 17/2 (1981) 115.

166 Cf. the fifth thesis by Otto Hermann Pesch in which he states that the "judging ministry of the justification article may only be applied in a situation of crisis of the church - otherwise it will be a law of faith (*Glaubensgesetz*) that will endanger the purity of faith as much as the necessity of certain works", O.H. Pesch, 'Rechtfertigung und Kirche: Die kriteriologische Bedeutung der Rechtfertigungslehre für die Ekklesiologie', *ÖR* 37 (1988) 40.

167 Noteworthy is that, for whatever reason, in Birmelé's French translation of Malta § 27 the adjective 'comprehensively' is left out; cf. Birmelé, *Le salut*, 106. The French translation in *PL* 21 (1976) 85 uses *globalement* and the original German version *zusammenfassend*; in: H. Meyer/H.J. Urban/L. Vischer (ed), *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung: Sämtlicher Berichte und Konsentexte interkonfessioneller Gespräche auf Weltebene 1931-1982*, Paderborn 1983, 255.

both Lutherans and Roman Catholics to be the paramount paradigm for the understanding of salvation in contemporary times, but because the understanding of justification has been a major barricade on the way to mutual acceptance. Now that in the report Lutherans and Roman Catholics agree on justification, it is noteworthy that the report avoids speaking of justification apart from the first chapter (§ 26-29). Hardly any attention is paid to the question for whom/what justification is important and whether humanity or creation is in need of justification and what this means in today's world. The report remains faithful to its point of departure, namely to speak of "the event of salvation to which the gospel testifies" (§ 27) and for which more than one paradigm could be used. In the last paragraph of the first chapter the paradigm of freedom seems to be most suitable for both Roman Catholics and Lutherans: "Lutherans and Catholics alike are convinced that the gospel is the foundation of Christian freedom" (§ 30), namely freedom from sin, power of the law and death and freedom for service toward God and neighbour¹⁶⁸. In the second chapter (the relation between gospel and world, § 35-46) the paradigm of reconciliation is used. Although reconciliation does not play a major role, it is not without meaning that it is used here. Exactly the chapter that pays attention to the relevance of the gospel for today's world does not use justification to refer to the saving acts of God, but reconciliation. Here the report speaks of the relationship between gospel and world in terms of a mutual influence. The world as the *locus* and the goal of the proclamation of the gospel "inevitably influences the formulation of the gospel and the life and structures of the church" (§ 35). Thus, many doctrinal disagreements, which arose in a world very different from the present, are losing importance. This does not mean that, automatically, a new and uniform theology arises out of the newly perceived world. On the contrary, 'the world', conceived in many different ways

as cosmos, as the network of social and cultural relationships, as *locus* and object of human activity - individually and corporately - and, finally, as the created, fallen and divinely-redeemed order (§ 37),

will ask for a common answers from Lutherans and Roman Catholics¹⁶⁹. At the same time the world

must be viewed from the center of the gospel, ..., from the perspective of God's eschatological, saving act in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The gospel aims for the reconciliation of all men (§ 39).

The christological approach of the report is also apparent in these paragraphs on the gospel and the world (§ 35-46)). For the whole of the report the theological scheme is summarized in this quotation: "What God has done for the salvation of the world in Jesus Christ is transmitted in the gospel and made present in the Holy Spirit" (§ 16). God is the acting power who once worked in Jesus Christ, and the Spirit actualizes this act. Both God and the Spirit are characterized in a more active way, while Christ seems to be a more passive figure in God's plan. God worked *in* Christ and the Holy Spirit makes "the Christ event into a saving action" (§ 18)¹⁷⁰. Here, however, this christological concentration is most specific. First, because of the

168 Where justification is regarded as an encompassing expression for the event of salvation it is likewise said that "the message of justification is the foundation of Christian freedom" (§ 27).

169 Precisely about this issue the Introduction of the *Malta Report* makes the remark that the relationship between gospel and world needs a more comprehensive treatment. "For an adequate theological consideration of these questions, such disciplines as ethics, sociology and psychology among others have a more than auxiliary function for theology" (§ 10). Apart from this, the comment is made that the concept of the gospel requires greater attention to the Old Testament: "Further, a full understanding of the concept of gospel requires greater attention to the Old Testament. To be sure, in the present report this concept is in no way limited to the New Testament gospels nor identified with them. Yet a more intensive study of the witness of the Old Testament would lead to further insight", (§ 10).

170 Cf. also the following quotations "It is for the sake of the world that Christ lived, died and rose again. Likewise,

references to Jesus' cross and resurrection as the ultimate saving events in § 35 and 39-41¹⁷¹, and secondly, because here (§ 40) it becomes clear how the cross and salvation are related. The cross is a hidden victory. It is hidden so that the church will witness to Christ's work of reconciliation by sharing in his sufferings and abstaining from triumphalism and theocratic tendencies. It is a victory so that the gospel "is more than a message. It reveals the power of the 'eschaton' already at work in our world under the form of the cross" (§ 40). Accordingly the church must witness in acts, "bearing the weaknesses of the weak and identifying with the needy and oppressed" (§ 40).

Conclusions

- (1) In the *Malta Report* salvation is granted "by the eschatological saving act of God in Jesus' cross and resurrection" (§ 24). It is made present in the Holy Spirit and is meant for the world. Therefore, 'common witness' is an important category. Witness is not considered as a confession of faith, but as a common responsibility of the churches for witnessing to the gospel in the contemporary world.
- (2) In the divine eschatological act the role of Jesus is rather passive and all emphasis lays on his death and resurrection, which are called "the ultimate saving events". Special attention is paid to the cross as a hidden victory.
- (3) There is no attention to the question of appropriation, although the Lutherans wish to clarify the relationship between church and salvation by subjecting the church's traditions and institutions to the unconditionality of the gift of salvation. The question whether Roman Catholics have agreed on the central position of justification as expressing the totality of the gospel and as criterion for safeguarding the unconditionality of God's grace is answered differently. Whereas Meyer argues that Lutherans and Roman Catholics agree on both the meaning of justification and on its theological position (as centre and criterion)¹⁷², Birmelé regretfully concludes that Lutherans have agreed on an understanding of justification as a possible centre next to other possibilities instead of holding to the central place of justification in Lutheranism. According to Birmelé it is questionable for Lutherans to regard justification as one possible expression of the understanding of salvation among others¹⁷³. It is precisely this point which will be discussed in later Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues. The merit of *Malta* is that it has taken up the developments in biblical theology and has broadened the perspective in speaking of salvation as an eschatological act of God in Christ. This act has certain characteristics which are comprehensively expressed in the concept of justification, although not in an exclusive way. Other concepts also can express God's salvation in a comprehensive way. In doing so they emphasize different aspects without

it is in the world and for the sake of the world that the church witnesses to these saving acts of God" (§ 35); "... God's eschatological saving act in (...) Christ" (§ 39); "God's redemptive act in Christ takes place (§ 40); "... the saving act of God accomplished once for all in Jesus Christ..." (§ 47); "... the saving act of God in Christ" (§ 49).

171 "It is for the sake of the world that Christ lived, died and rose again. Likewise, it is in the world and for the sake of the world that the church witnesses to these saving acts of God" (§ 35); "... God's eschatological saving act in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ" (§ 39); "God's redemptive act in Christ takes place on and through the cross (§ 40); "Christ's victory through his death and resurrection..." (§ 41).

172 Cf. H. Meyer, 'Rechtfertigung im ökumenischen Dialog: Eine Einführung' in: G. Gassmann/H. Meyer (ed), *Rechtfertigung im ökumenischen Dialog: Dokumente und Einführung*, Frankfurt am Main (Lembeck/Knecht) 1987, 61.

173 "Avec l'accord des participants luthériens, la justification fut considérée comme un centre possible à côté d'autres", Birmelé, *Le salut*, 108.

necessarily excluding aspects of other concepts. There is no reason to assume that Paul, or other New Testament authors used different concepts to express the meaning of salvation, if they did not intend to emphasize different aspects of that salvation, depending on their own situation, their specific reading of Scripture and tradition, without wanting to diminish the meaning of God's initiating grace in the salvific process.

- (4) The main soteriological concept used is justification, primarily for historical reasons: for a long time the understanding of justification has been a major barricade on the way to mutual acceptance. The conclusion that there is a far-reaching agreement on justification echoes to a certain extent the results of the Edinburgh, 1937 conference. There is an "extensive consensus in the interpretation of justification and also a convergence of view in the controversial question of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition"¹⁷⁴. The relationship between God and the human being, as the centre of disagreement, is said not to be a church-dividing problem any more. Essential is the agreement on God's initiative in the gift of salvation. This gift is given unconditionally, not only as individual forgiveness of sins, but it also means in effect new life for the believer. In Edinburgh, 1937 this renewal was mentioned as belonging to sanctification, but here sanctification is part of justification itself. Explicit discussions about classical issues like faith and responsibility, sinfulness of the justified, merit, and satisfaction are not mentioned in the report. The agreement on the interpretation of justification is rather short. Therefore the question what justification actually means has a modest place in the report. It is characterized as freedom from and freedom for, and the church plays a role in its mediation. To a certain extent the concept of freedom echoes the option for liberation and freedom in different parts of the ecumenical movement in those days, but explicit references to external events are not made. Nevertheless, the relationship of the concept of freedom to the rest of the report is rather unclear. There are no attempts to clarify the use of the concept of freedom from, for example, an anthropological point of view. The main cause must be that the report is predominantly interested in the place of justification in the respective Lutheran and Roman Catholic way of believing. The use of the concept of reconciliation in other parts of the report, in particular in chapter II (e.g. § 39 and 40) on the relationship between gospel and world, shows that reconciliation is regarded as being a more fruitful concept than justification for the actual meaning of salvation in Christ. The demand for a comprehensive treatment of the relationship between gospel and world, which is only touched upon, also shows that the overcoming of an old controversy on salvation does not automatically generate a new understanding of it¹⁷⁵.

2.2 The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the United States of America, 1983: *Justification by Faith*

While the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue proceeded, some regional Lutheran-Roman Catholic conversations focused on salvation, in particular on justification. The Malta agreement can be

¹⁷⁴ 'Facing Unity', *ISer* 59/3-4 (1985) 44.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. also the reaction of H. Conzelmann in one of the four special statements attached to the *Malta Report*, in which he states that "contemporary movements both among church people and also particularly among the younger generation of theologians should in my view receive more consideration, as for example, the demand for making infant baptism optional or even abolishing it", Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 188.

regarded as the 'mother' of those dialogues, because its compact statement on justification demanded Lutherans especially to go more deeply into the issue. This happened in various countries, among which the German and American dialogues are the most important ones¹⁷⁶. In Germany attention was paid to the issue of justification in the Ecumenical Study Group of Protestant (*Evangelisch*) and Catholic Theologians¹⁷⁷. This dialogue was particularly concerned with the question whether the mutual doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century still stood in the way of a common witness¹⁷⁸. In the United States of America a group of fourteen Lutheran¹⁷⁹ and ten Roman Catholic theologians, appointed respectively by the Lutheran World Ministries (the USA National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation) and the US Roman Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, discussed the topic Justification by Faith during a lasting nearly six years series of talks between 1978 and 1983¹⁸⁰. During the first six rounds justification played only a subordinate role¹⁸¹. The seventh round, however, was entirely devoted to this subject and led to the publication of a rather long statement called *Justification by Faith*¹⁸². Its task was to provide "a greater clarity about the way to understand and speak of justification than has yet been achieved in official discussions" (§ 2) in order to help the churches see "how and why they can and should increasingly proclaim together the one, undivided gospel of God's saving mercy in Jesus Christ" (§ 4). Whereas the cover text - with a good sense for historical proportions - claims that for "the first time since Regensburg 1541 an official Lutheran and Roman Catholic dialogue has produced a common statement on the doctrine of justification", it is true that *Justification by Faith* plays an important role in the development of the ecumenical debate on salvation and in particular on justification and not only in the (international) Lutheran-Roman Catholic debate. ARCIC II (see this chapter B 3) and other bilateral dialogues more than once refer to the results of this North American debate.

The Common Statement consists of an Introduction (§ 1-4) and three chapters, respectively called The History of the Question (§ 5-93), Reflection and Interpretation (§ 94-121) and Perspectives for Reconstruction (§ 122-160); the final paragraphs contain a Declaration (§ 161-165)¹⁸³. This sectionalization reveals the dominant historic concentration of the report with regard to its subject. Chapter one is divided into four periods: (a) Before the Sixteenth Century; (b) In the Sixteenth Century; (c) After the Sixteenth Century; and (d) Recent History. It is no surprise that within such historical concentration the sixteenth century is the pivotal point. Chapter two is an overview of how the historical developments have shaped the contemporary Lutheran and Roman Catholic understanding of justification. In this chapter Lutherans and Roman Catholic express how they perceive their own and their partners' position. Here, the chronological approach is followed by a systematic one in which "different concerns and thought patterns" (§ 96) are regarded as emerging in six themes: (1) forensic justification; (2)

176 Other Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues have taken place in, for example, Sweden, Canada, Australia, Japan, India and Norway (cf. in particular the 1991 Norwegian statement on justification in: *Joint Statements by the Catholic-Lutheran Discussion Group, 1982-1991*, Oslo (Church of Norway) 1995).

177 K. Lehmann/W. Pannenberg (ed), *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?*, Minneapolis (Fortress) 1990; originally published as *Lehrverurteilungen - kirchentrennend? 1: Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt in Zeitalter der Reformation und heute*, Dialog der Kirchen 4, Freiburg/Göttingen (Herder) 1986. In the strict sense of the word it must be said that this dialogue is a Lutheran-Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue.

178 Cf. the editors preface in: Lehmann/Pannenberg, *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era*, 3

179 The amount of fourteen refers to the total number of the Lutherans involved in the dialogue.

180 Anderson/Murphy/Burgess, *Justification by Faith*, 10-12.

181 Themes were: The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church (1965); One Baptism for the Remission of Sins (1966); The Eucharist as Sacrifice (1966-67); Eucharist and Ministry (1968-70); Papal Primacy and the Universal Church (1970-73); and Teaching Authority and Infallibility of the Church (1973-1978). For a general introduction in the American Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue cf. C. Braaten/J. Johnson/J. Reumann, 'Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue' in: J.A. Burgess (ed), *Lutherans in Ecumenical Dialogue: A Reappraisal*, Augsburg (Fortress) 1990, 25-32.

182 Published in: Anderson/Murphy/Burgess, *Justification by Faith*, 15-74. This volume contains furthermore sixteen background papers which were given during the several rounds of talks by participants in the dialogue. Other lectures were not published or published elsewhere, cf. page 10-12.

183 In pages: chapter one has 31, chapter two has 8 and chapter three has 16 pages.

sinfulness of the justified; (3) sufficiency of faith; (4) merit; (5) satisfaction; and (6) criteria of authenticity. The third chapter is to a large extent devoted to the results of contemporary biblical theological research in the field of justification (§ 122-149) and concludes with an account of the Growing Convergences (§ 150-160).

The report is composed in such a way that it confronts doctrinal problems developed throughout history with recent results of biblical theology in order to remove obstacles to joint present-day proclamation of the message of justification. In its own words it "seeks to indicate how historic disagreements in the interpretation of the biblical doctrine of justification have developed and to what extent they can now be overcome" (§ 3). As a result of the growing convergences between Lutheran and Roman Catholics in the field of the issue 'Scripture and Tradition', biblical theology is not regarded as the *ancilla* of doctrinal presumptions (the Bible as a collection of proof-texts). Therefore it can function as an eye-opener to disagreements that existed before. In this respect the report quotes two passages from John Reumann's book '*Righteousness*' in the *New Testament*¹⁸⁴, which reveal this break-through created by biblical theology. On the one hand it regards Reumann's view as the common Lutheran opinion, namely that justification as a theme "has more nuances and, some would say, limitations in expressing the gospel than has been generally supposed in their tradition" (§ 123)¹⁸⁵. The response of Fitzmyer, on the other hand, is regarded as the general Roman Catholic position, namely that "righteousness/justification is more prevalent in New Testament teaching than has normally been suspected in earlier centuries or among earlier commentators, and that it is an image of prime importance for our expression of the Christ-event or even the gospel" (§ 123)¹⁸⁶. So biblical theological findings have not resulted in a more specific and particular understanding of salvation, but they have showed that the

biblical witness to the gospel of God's saving work in Christ is richer and more varied than has been encompassed in either traditional Catholic or Lutheran approaches to justification (§ 149).

The growing convergence between Lutheran and Roman Catholics is not only caused by "a number of convergences and outright agreements already existing in the work of Catholic and non-Catholic exegetes but also (by) some particular emphases and new insights not previously highlighted" (§ 124)¹⁸⁷. Despite the results of the biblical theological approach and despite other grounds that have drawn Lutherans and Roman Catholics closer together in recent times¹⁸⁸, this does not automatically lead to full agreement between Lutherans and Roman Catholics on justification. The recognized and accepted variety of the Scriptures forces them to take a stand on the appraisal of the remaining differences. Both parties now can say that

184 J. Reumann, '*Righteousness*' in the *New Testament: 'Justification' in the United States Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, with responses by J.A. Fitzmyer and J.D. Quinn*, Philadelphia/New York (Fortress/Paulist Press) 1982.

185 Based on § 347-349 of Reumann's book.

186 Reumann, '*Righteousness*' in the *New Testament*, 226 (§ 423).

187 Seven areas of discovery are mentioned, six of them dealing with the variety of the Scriptures and one with a specific theme: (1) The Hebrew Scriptures as proper setting for any discussion on justification (§ 124-127); (2) the use of justification terminology in the earliest Christianity (§ 128); (3) new insights in Paul's use and sharpening of justification language (§ 129-136); (4) greater agreement in the Pauline letters, generally considered to belong to Paul's pupils or the Pauline school (§ 137-138); (5) other New Testament writings, such as the synoptic gospels and the Johannine *corpus* (§ 139-141); (6) the letter of James, considered as "an area which has been of neuralgic significance in Lutheran-Catholic debates" (§ 142); (7) the topic of merit in the Scriptures (§ 143-145).

188 Cf. "These convergences have been facilitated by the widespread disappearance of non-theological sources of division. The crowns of princes, the incomes of priests and pastors, the standing social classes are no longer intertwined (...) with the conflict over justification" (§ 150).

a faith centered and forensically conceived picture of justification is of major importance for Paul and, in a sense, for the Bible as a whole, although it is by no means the only biblical or Pauline way of representing God's saving work (§ 147).

However, it is a matter of attitude towards questions about the *Mitte der Schrift* or a 'canon within the canon' that is decisive for the degree of importance of justification for the understanding of salvation.

When a principle such as justification by faith is taken as the key to the interpretation of all Scripture, those biblical books, especially Paul's major letters, which stress this doctrine are sometimes regarded as canonical in a special sense, while others (e.g. James) may be viewed as of secondary or even doubtful canonicity (§ 147).

In order to solve this problem of the *Mitte der Schrift* Lutherans and Roman Catholics agree on a Christological principle with regard to the interpretation of Scripture, namely that it has a

Christological center which should control the interpretation of those parts of the Bible which focus on matters other than the center itself and which are therefore of secondary rank in the canonical hierarchy (§ 149).

Similar to the *Malta Report Justification by Faith* holds that the centre of the Scripture is not to be found in Scripture itself, in the sense of its terminology and texts, but first and foremost in the gospel of God to which Scripture refers. The Christological understanding of this centre is not only made clear in the passage from § 149, quoted above, but also and more pronounced in the basic affirmation of the whole report:

Our entire hope of justification and salvation rests on Christ Jesus and on the gospel whereby the good news of God's merciful action in Christ is made known; we do not place our ultimate trust in anything other than God's promise and saving work in Christ (§ 4; repeated in § 157)¹⁸⁹.

Hence the christological approach of the report is the basis for a common affirmation that presents an encompassing agreement on salvation. This does not mean that all differences on the doctrine of justification are solved, but, in the light of this agreement, they are regarded as less fundamental and therefore less credible and tenable as church-dividing issues. Therefore the result of the report is described in the terminology of growing convergences rather than (full) agreement (§ 152). This is done as well in order to distinguish between two levels of convergence that play a role throughout the whole Lutheran-Roman Catholic debate, viz. justification considered in and of itself, its material meaning; and justification applied as a criterion of authenticity for the church's proclamation and practice¹⁹⁰. There is less convergence on the second use of justification than on the first. This does not mean that Lutherans and Roman Catholics do not agree on the need for a criterion to test the church's words and deeds, and so they both can accept justification as an *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*. The

189 Cf. also the first element of the material convergence: "Christ and his gospel are the source, center, and norm of Christian life, individual and corporate, in church and world. Christians have no other basis for eternal life and hope of final salvation than God's free gift in Jesus Christ, extended to them in the Holy Spirit" (§ 156). The final reason to accept justification as an *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* is its protection of the *solus Christus* (§ 155).

190 Meyer and Gassmann distinguish between three levels on which justification is discussed. First of all, the level of *meaning*. What does justification mean as doctrine with its various aspects (justification as dogma)? In the second place, the level of *position*: what is the theological place of justification in the whole of church and theology; thus the question of its centrality and criteriological function (justification as a meta-dogmatic or meta-theological principle)? Thirdly, the level of *use*: how is justification applied in specific ecumenical questions (the application of justification as criterion); Gassmann/Meyer, *Rechtfertigung im ökumenischen Dialog*, 12-13. Cf. George A. Tavard, 'Justification in Dialogue', *OiC* 25 (1989) 299-310.

difficulty is that there is no full agreement on those church practices and proclamations that can 'pass the test'. Hence not these issues as such are at stake here, but their accordance with the doctrine of justification. Lutherans do not repudiate that Roman Catholic beliefs, practices and structures like e.g. purgatory, the papacy, and the cult of saints are consistent with justification by faith and as such do not need to be dividing. Roman Catholics, although they consider their church practices etc. as 'justification-proof', are open to different opinions as to whether these practices have to be accepted as a condition for unity (§ 153).

Under the heading 'Use of the Criterion' (§ 153-154) attention is paid also to the differences in structures of thought that play "a considerable role in causing tension between Catholic and Lutheran views of justification" (§ 154). References are made to the Roman Catholic structure of thought in which justification is regarded as a process of ontological transformation, based on God's respect for human freedom and a real change effectuated by the Holy Spirit. The Lutheran position is more inclined to emphasize 'a model of simultaneity', and to avoid every appreciation and role of human freedom and goodness, because this would undermine the unconditionality of God's promises in Christ. It seems that here the real problem is touched upon, where differences in understanding justification determine the way in which justification is used as criterion. What exactly these differences in structures of thought are, is not further elaborated. Moreover, the expression 'structures of thought' seems to be a little confusing, as if Roman Catholics and Lutherans are entirely bound by these structures of thought and are not able to relate them to each other. Do different structures of thought mean something other than Lutherans and Roman Catholics expressing differences when speaking about justification; and hence its criteriological function is differently interpreted? The situation is complicated by the fact that different structures of thought do not go exactly along the line of the two confessions and play a role between and within them. It is clear that the way justification can perform its criteriological function depends on how it is understood. As long as the differences in understanding justification (in short: as an ontological process or as an existential point in time) that are related to different concerns (in short and extreme: the aspect of concreteness and reality of God's salvation or the aspect of unconditionality of God's salvation) are considered as excluding each other, progress can hardly be made.

Nonetheless, despite the different meanings of justification, both Lutherans and Roman Catholics can accept their respective concerns and hold that they

believe... that here too Lutherans and Catholics can acknowledge the legitimacy of concerns that come to expression in different ways. In view of the convergences to which we now turn, theological disagreements about structures of thought in relation to the proclamation of the gospel, though serious, need not be church-dividing (§ 154).

In particular point five of the twelve points of agreement of the second (material) convergence (§ 156), expresses an attempt to bring the two structures of thought more together:

Justification, as a transition from disfavor and unrighteousness to favor and righteousness in God's sight, is totally God's work. By Jesus Christ we are both declared and made righteous. Justification, therefore is not a legal fiction. God, in justifying, effects what he promises; he forgives sin and make us truly righteous (§ 156).

Here again, the report seeks to safeguard two concerns, the unconditionality of salvation ("totally God's work", "declared righteous", forgiveness of sin) and its ontological reality (made/make righteous, "not a legal fiction", effectiveness), although the question remains how they relate to each other. Therefore the role of justification in its criteriological function remains somewhat unclear (whether this lack of clarity justifies church division is a different

question). The different accents Lutherans and Roman Catholics lay on their understanding of justification have an effect on the way it functions as a criterion. According to the fundamental affirmation (§ 4 and 157) the growing convergence is achieved particularly in the sphere of the first concern that "reliance for salvation should be placed entirely on God" (§ 157). This formulation is used, because it can express a central concern of the doctrine of justification, although it is not fully equivalent to the Reformers' teaching, and does, at the same time, not deny "the traditional Catholic position that the grace-wrought transformation of sinners is a necessary preparation for final salvation" (§ 157).

The agreement, in short, is on the nature of trust or assurance of salvation, on the fundamental experiential attitude of the justified in relation to God (*coram deo*) (§ 157).

Because the centre of the agreement is that the ultimate hope and trust for salvation are to be placed in God, both Lutherans and Roman Catholics can agree that there is no need for a specific conceptualization of God's work of salvation.

That work can be expressed in the imagery of God as judge who pronounces sinners innocent and righteous..., and also in a transformist view which emphasizes the change wrought in sinners by infused grace (§ 158)¹⁹¹.

Unity or uniformity in describing salvation is not necessary for unity between Lutherans and Roman Catholics and it can be debated what is the best way to proclaim God's gift in Christ for salvation.

Conclusions

- (1) (2) Similar to the *Malta Report Justification by Faith's* soteriological point of departure is christologically oriented. God's action in Christ is the cornerstone of human's hope of justification and salvation. This agreement is expressed in a central affirmation which is accepted by Lutherans and Roman Catholics (§ 149). It is not fully equivalent to the Reformation teaching, but at the same time expresses its central concern, and it does not reject traditional Roman Catholic positions. Central is that reliance for salvation should be placed entirely on God. God's gift of salvation is unconditional. This affirmation is accepted as criterion for all the church's teachings and practices.
- (3) More explicit than Malta did, the report makes clear that, next to the material convergence on the central concern of justification and its criteriological function, the crux of the discussion between Lutherans and Roman Catholic is the application of the criterion. Both accept that the church's teachings and practices should be placed under the norm of the gospel, but the question is which teachings and practices pass the test.
- (4) Justification is one of the primary concepts used to express this central concern; nevertheless it is not bound to one particular way of expression. Nevertheless, contrary to the *Malta Report Justification by Faith* is to a large extent oriented on the overcoming of historic disagreements in the interpretation of justification. The relationship between

¹⁹¹ Here the report refers to the *Malta Report* and its attention to other comprehensive concepts, however, *Justification by Faith* seems to be more outspoken in its determined rejection of human accomplishments in the salvific process: ultimate hope and trust for salvation are to be placed... "not in our own goodness, even when this is God-given, or in our religious experience, even when this is the experience of faith" (§ 158).

gospel and world which plays a role in the *Malta Report* is not in sight here. The discussion is determined by a problem inherited from the past and it does not break through the limits this approach entails. Hence, it removes obstacles to joint proclamation of the message of justification, but does not ask the question in what sense this message has relevancy for today's world, e.g. the eschatological, individual and communal aspects of salvation and justification. This does not mean that this relevancy is denied, but the agreement does not incorporate the question what the meaning of justification could be today¹⁹².

2.3 The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, 1993: *Church and Justification*

During its second phase (1973-1984) the renewed international Roman Catholic-Lutheran Joint Commission produced six reports and met ten times in plenary sessions of the Commission¹⁹³. In Geneva (1973) and Rome (1974) the contemporary relations between Lutheran Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in different countries and continents were analysed, reactions on the *Malta Report* evaluated and the aim for the dialogue to come determined. Most important task was to prove the claims of the *Malta Report* and to deepen the understanding of its consequences. Three themes were considered to be subject for further examination, viz. "1) Eucharist 2) Episcopal Office 3) Ways to Community"¹⁹⁴. This resulted in the document *The Eucharist*¹⁹⁵, which appeared in 1978, after two meetings of the Commission in Liebfrauenberg (France, 1976) and Paderborn (Germany, 1977). In Lantana (1981) the document *The Ministry in the Church* appeared, reporting the discussions on the episcopal office. At a plenary meeting in Kirchberg, Germany 1983, this common statement of the Joint Commission was adopted. Furthermore, two documents were devoted to visible unity. The document *Ways to Community* was published in 1980¹⁹⁶, after a meeting in Sigtuna, Sweden 1978. In Rome, 1984 the Commission concluded its task on the last document of the second phase with the publication of *Facing Unity: Models, Forms and Phases of Catholic-Lutheran Church Fellowship*¹⁹⁷. Two Reformation anniversaries gave the opportunity to produce two extra, non-planned, reports. In 1980, at a session in Augsburg, Germany - at the 450th anniversary of the *Confessio Augustana* - a statement was adopted, called *All Under One Christ*¹⁹⁸. The main reason to focus on the CA was to find out "whether the Roman Catholics could recognize and acknowledge this Lutheran confession as a particular but authentic expression of the common faith"¹⁹⁹. On the occasion of Martin Luther's 500th birthday a statement was drawn up, called *Martin Luther - Witness to Jesus Christ*²⁰⁰. A seventh report on the eucharist (1982) remained

192 It is interesting that in their description of justification in ecumenical dialogue Meyer and Gassmann add a possible fourth aspect of how justification is used in ecumenical dialogues, though it is referred to only in a short note (note 11, page 13): its current interest and meaning, an aspect which is present in some dialogues "be it only tentatively". The fact that they leave this fourth aspect out in their main text, shows that it is of little importance in the dialogues, cf. Gassmann/Meyer, *Rechtfertigung im ökumenischen Dialog*, 12-13.

193 Cf. also H.-A. Raem, 'The Third Phase of the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, 1986-1993', *OiC* 30/4 (1994) 310-327 (= *ISer* 86/2-3 (1994) 189-190).

194 Cf. Historical Introduction to 'The Eucharist', Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 190.

195 Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 190-214.

196 'Ways to Community, 1980', Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 215-240 (= 'Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission', *OiC* 17/4 (1981) 356-382).

197 Roman Catholic / Lutheran Joint Commission, 'Facing Unity: Models, Forms and Phases of Catholic-Lutheran Church Fellowship', *ISer* 59/3-4 (1985) 44-72.

198 'All Under One Christ: Statement on the Augsburg Confession by the Roman Catholic / Lutheran Joint Commission', Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 241-247; also: 'All Under One Christ: Roman Catholic / Lutheran Joint Commission Statement on the Augsburg Confession', *ISer* 44/3-4 (1980) 138-141; 'Ibidem', *OiC* 16/3 (1980) 265-272. An official reaction from Lutheran side was given in: 'Lutheran World Federation Executive Committee Statement on Lutheran/Roman Catholic Relations', *OiC* 17/4 (1981) 382-387.

199 'Lutheran World Federation Executive Committee Statement on Lutheran/Roman Catholic Relations', *OiC* 17/4 (1981) 383.

200 'Martin Luther - Witness to Jesus Christ', *ISer* 52/3 (1983) 84-88; also *OiC* 19/3 (1983) 291-297. Together with 'All under one Christ' this document shows in particular that the history of the reformation and its consequences

unpublished because of supposed objections by some of the Roman Catholic members of the dialogue commission. The same happened to a 'platform-statement' on justification which circulated among dialogue participants in the early years of the third phase (see the next section on the *Joint Declaration*)²⁰¹.

Soteriology did not explicitly appear as a theme in the second phase. Nevertheless, the concept of justification played a substantial role in both statements on the eucharist and ministry. Despite the claim of a "far-reaching agreement in the understanding of the doctrine of justification" in the *Malta Report* (Malta § 28), the problem of its place and role in and for the church remained unsolved, a problem to which particularly Lutherans referred. The attempt of the *Malta Report* to put every emphasis on the Christ event and its use of other concepts than justification appeared to be dissatisfying because the problem itself was not tackled and it required a solution. Thus the fact that the ecclesiological implications of the justification agreement were regarded to be insufficiently clarified, made a new and more explicit dialogue on the church necessary. Like in other dialogues ecclesiology came up as the encompassing subject to which agreements about important specific themes could be linked and grounded in a common statement. This happened, however, in a specific way, namely in the light of the doctrine of justification. Thus the two decisive questions for the whole of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue - that of justification and ecclesial structures - were brought together. Therefore, the respective chairmen stated that the role of the church in salvation "grew organically out of the reports of the first two phases"²⁰². In fact, the theme of the *Malta Report* was taken up again, however from the opposite direction. The title of the *Malta Report 'Gospel and Church'* (cf. the titles of the chapters above) suggests a movement from the gospel to the church and the world. Here, however, ecclesiology became the starting-point, which is reflected in the title *Church and Justification*²⁰³. From this starting-point it is understandable that the dialogue also paid attention to broader ecclesiological questions, like the origin of the church and its mission and its eschatological consummation.

In 1985 a joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic planning group produced a memorandum (unpublished) which said that

Catholics and Lutherans keep coming back to the question about the understanding of the church, more precisely to the central question of the church and the nature of its instrumentality in the divine plan of salvation (...) It is less a matter of the understanding of justification as such... rather it is a matter of the implications of the mutual relationship of justification and the church²⁰⁴.

substantially determines the dialogue between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. In terms of the *Malta Report* the goal of the dialogue is to "identify and eliminate misunderstandings and causes of irritation" (Malta § 2) focusing on "clarification and improvement of the relations" (Malta § 13).

201 Cf. Meyer, 'Weg und Ertrag des internationalen katholisch/lutherischen Dialogs', 324. He refers to two 'unborn children' of the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. First, the document *Gegenseitige Zulassung zum Herrenmahl (Mutual Admittance to the Eucharist***)* and second, the 'platform-statement' on justification, a document about the interpretation of justification, which was based on the justification dialogues in the USA (*Justification by Faith*) and the German *Condemnations of the Reformation Era - Do They Still Divide? (= Lehrverurteilungen - Kirchentrennend?)*.

202 From the foreword of 'Church and Justification', *ISer* 86/3-4 (1994) 130. Cf. Meyer: "Aber auch die Arbeit der jetzigen dritten Phase muß als Wiederaufnahme und Vertiefung der großen Aussagen des Malta-Berichtes verstanden werden", H. Meyer, 'Weg und Ertrag des internationalen katholisch/lutherischen Dialogs', *US* 48 (1993) 322.

203 At the beginning the report speaks of the relationship between justification and church, and implicitly refers to the 'far-reaching consensus' of the *Malta Report* and the discussion it evoked when it describes the task of the dialogue: "a consensus in the doctrine of justification - even if it is nuanced - must prove itself ecclesologically" (§ 2).

204 Citation of the Joint Memorandum of the Roman Catholic-Lutheran Planning Meeting, Rome 19-20 March 1995, quoted in the foreword of 'Church and Justification', *ISer* 86/3-4 (1994) 130.

The discussions on this persistent question started in 1986²⁰⁵. Plenary sessions took place every year²⁰⁶ next to annual drafting meetings, which at that time both resulted in one of the longest dialogues in the relatively short history of bilateral dialogues²⁰⁷. The text consists of a foreword and five chapters, divided in 308 numbered paragraphs: (i) Justification and the Church (§ 1-9); (ii) The Abiding Origin of the Church (§ 10-47); (iii) The Church of the Triune God (§ 48-106); (iv) The Church as Recipient and Mediator of Salvation (§ 107-242); (v) The Mission and Consummation of the Church (§ 243-308). The length of the fourth chapter ('The Church as Recipient and Mediator of Salvation') already reveals that the heart of the dialogue is to be found in the section where the question of the relation between church and salvation is at stake.

The first chapter has an introductory character and it sets the tone of the report. Both justification and the church belong to the truths of faith (§ 4-5) because they are founded in the mystery of Christ and the Trinity (§ 6-7). Therefore they are first and foremost a gift of grace:

The mystery of Christ and of the Trinity is the foundation for this unmerited gracious gift of justification and the church (...) It corresponds to the graciousness of this gift that human beings contribute nothing but can only receive in faith (§ 8).

The alignment of justification and church as a gift of grace and challenge to the world is characteristic for the report. Basically they are not contradictory, but belong to the same realm of God's grace. With regard to the issue of justification this is no surprise whereas grace is the essence of God's justifying action. With regard to the church this is an important point of departure. The existing, mainly *konfessionskundlich* coloured views of an 'underestimation' of the church as merely the sum of the faithful in Protestant circles (§ 176) and the catholic 'overestimation' of the church so that it obscures the gospel (§ 166) are avoided. In the following chapters the essence of the church is elaborated from a christological and a trinitarian point of view. The christological approach of ecclesiology means that

the one and only foundation of the church is the saving work of God in Jesus Christ which has taken place once and for all. Everything that is to be said on the origin, nature and purpose of the church must be understood as an explanation of this principle (§ 10).

205 For a general introduction in the history of the third phase cf. H.-A. Raem, 'The Third Phase of the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, 1986-1993', *OiC* 30/4 (1994) 310-327 (= *ISer* 86/2-3 (1994) 189-190). For an introduction in the text of *Church and Justification* from a Catholic perspective cf. one of the members of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission L. Ullrich, 'Genesis und Schwerpunkte des Katholisch-Lutherischen Dialogdokumentes "Kirche und Rechtfertigung"', *Catholica* 50/1 (1996) 1-22; and from a Lutheran perspective P. Norgaard-Højen, 'Einig in der Rechtfertigungslehre: Reflexionen zum Ergebnis der dritten Phase des katholisch-lutherischen Dialogs', *ÖR* 45/1 (1996) 6-23.

206 The fourteen members of the commission met eight times: in Bossey, 1986 ('Catholic/Lutheran International Dialogue, March 10-14, 1986' *ISer* 60/1-2 (1986) 33-34); Wiesbaden-Naurod, 1987 ('Lutheran/Catholic International Commission, February 15-21, 1987', *ISer* 63/1 (1987) 13); Versailles, 1988 ('Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission, March 7-11, 1988', *ISer* 67/2 (1988) 91-92); Opole, 1989 ('Lutheran/Roman Catholic International Dialogue, February 27-March 4, 1989', *ISer* 69/1 (1989) 22); Oslo, 1990 ('Lutheran-Catholic Joint Commission', *ISer* 75/4 (1990) 169-170); Venice, 1991 ('Lutheran-Catholic Joint Commission', *ISer* 78/3-4 (1991) 205-206); Eisenach, 1992 ('Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission, Eisenach, Germany, November 10-14, 1992', *ISer* 83/2 (1993) 89); and Würzburg, 1993 (*ISer* 84/3-4 (1993) 154-155).

207 Originally published in German: Gemeinsame römisch-katholische/evangelisch-lutherische Kommission, *Kirche und Rechtfertigung: Das Verständnis der Kirche im Licht der Rechtfertigungslehre*, Frankfurt-Paderborn 1994; English translation: Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission, *Church and Justification: Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of Justification*, Geneva (LWF) 1994 (= 'Report of the Third Phase of Lutheran/Catholic International Dialogue: "Church and Justification: Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of Justification"', *ISer* 86/3-4 (1994) 128-181).

Similar to the *Malta Report* this work of God in Christ is seen as an event, a history of salvation, not as an act of establishment. The distinction, however, is the much more comprehensive understanding of the Christ-event. It is not 'only' cross and resurrection (Malta § 24), but the totality of the Christ-event on which the church is founded. This totality even stretches backwards to the election of Israel, the abiding presupposition of the church, and forwards to the inclusion of the nations and, in particular to the church. The backward looking could suggest a christological interpretation, even usurpation of the Old Testament (the election of Israel as part of the Christ-event), however the report considers the history of Israel as a continuing part of the totality of God's single plan of salvation. The fact that the Christ-event is regarded as part of the work of the Trinitarian God gives room for an understanding of the distinctive work of the Father to Israel.

Jesus' whole work is determined and permeated by the mystery of the Trinity (§ 12). The God who raised Jesus from the dead is the same God who called Abraham to be the father of all who believe, who elected Israel from among all the nations to be his treasured possession and who entered into an enduring covenant with it (§ 13).

Hence, Israel as presupposition has its own place as subject of God's love and grace, but, indeed, Jesus has a prime place in the Christ event.

That Jesus as Son of God is the Messiah and that in him the eschatological rule of God has dawned is the unique saving event which effects a definitive salvation for all the nations, going beyond all the saving gifts in the history of his people (§ 19).

The christological interpretation of salvation is, apart from Israel, related to the totality of Jesus' life. First, he proclaimed the reign of God in word and deed. Through him the saving power of God's eschatological reign dawned, which means his justifying love that creates salvation: mercy, forgiveness, salvation for the poor, the hungry and the suffering and correspondingly the unlimited love of one's neighbour (§ 22). Secondly, he died and was resurrected. Jesus' death is dealt with in the context of the eucharist. It is mainly considered as a sacrifice, not so much in the cultic sense but as a result of Jesus' accepting the consequences of his life in service. There are no further attempts to explain the saving aspect of Jesus' death in terms of other concepts: it is considered as an eschatological miracle that takes place in his atoning death on the cross "as once-for-all sacrifice, through which all who believe in him have been redeemed from sin (cf. Mt 26,28) and freed for life in the Spirit" (§ 27). In similar terms the report speaks of the resurrection as "God's central eschatological miracle". While the cross was an act of obedience of Jesus, the resurrection is characterized by God's strength:

By this act of God's power the death of Christ has acquired saving power: as the justification of sinners (cf. Rom 4,25) and as reconciliation with God (cf. 2 Cor 5,18-21) as well as new creation - life in the power of the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 5,17; Rom 8,9-11; Eph 2,5f; 1 Pet 1,2) (§ 30).

Although God's kingdom definitively has dawned in the Christ-event, it is not yet present in its ultimate manifestation. God's salvation history which started with the election of Israel and will end in the final arrival of the kingdom, which is the consummation of God's history with his chosen people, is linked, in Jesus' mission, with the inclusion of all nations and the foundation of the church "as God's eschatological community of salvation" (§ 22). Hence, the inclusion of the nations, which was already part of God's plan with Israel and the (foundation of the) church belong to the Christ-event, belong to God's salvation history. Therefore the church is the place where "the eschatological saving reality can already be experienced" although "it is not identical with the kingdom of God, which even after Easter remains hidden in the eschatological future"

(§ 25). This two-sidedness is basic for the understanding of the church throughout the report. But of prime importance is the understanding of the church as not identical with God's salvation but dependent on the proclamation of the gospel. Both Lutherans and Roman Catholics confess the church as *creatura evangelii* in that it lives on the foundation of the gospel that is communicated by the ministry in word and sacraments, as visible means of God's saving acts and of the gathering of his people, and accepted through faith. The proclamation of the gospel takes place in the Holy Spirit and by the apostles whose testimony is expressed in the New Testament. Including the Old Testament, the Scriptures are the source and the norm of the proclamation of the church. In short: "It is our common confession that the church is rooted in God's election of Israel as well as being founded in the Christ-event and the proclamation of the gospel by the apostles in the Holy Spirit" (§ 48)

The chapter on the trinitarian understanding of the church aims to do justice to ecclesiological aspects that are not 'covered' by a purely salvation-historical approach which mainly focused on the Christ-event. The two formulations must be seen as complementary to one another although the understanding of the church as *creatura evangelii* reflects, traditionally spoken, a more Lutheran tendency whereas the communion aspect of the Trinity reflects a more Roman Catholic way of speaking²⁰⁸. The heart of the trinitarian way of understanding the church is that the church is related to the triune God, a relationship which is causal and substantive (§ 48). The church is a divinely created human reality and is anchored in the Trinity:

God allows the church to share in the triune divine life: the church is God's own people, the body of the risen Christ himself, the temple of the Holy Spirit. The church's unity or communion (*koinônia*, *communio*) partakes of and reflects the unity of the triune God" (§ 49).

The reason why we can speak of the church as communion lays on the participation of the church in the communion of the Trinity.

However one looks at the church... it is rooted in the inseparable communion or *koinônia* of the three divine persons and is thereby itself constituted as *koinônia*. It is not primarily the communion of believers with each other which makes the church *koinônia*; it is primarily and fundamentally the communion of believers with God, the triune God whose innermost being is *koinônia*. And yet the communion of believers with the triune God is inseparable from their communion with each other (§ 65).

So the *koinonia* of the church is a real *koinonia* inseparable from its origin, the triune God. However, similar to what was said before about the church as the place of God's eschatological salvation, the church's *koinonia* is 'only' or, from a different perspective 'already' anticipatory.

Thus the church is already everything the biblical designations of it say it is (people of God, body of Christ, temple of Holy Spirit, RL) - but in such a way that it awaits in anticipation what is most profoundly its being and the source of its life (§ 72). It is already a partaking in the *koinônia* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but as the pilgrim church it is such provisionally and in fragmentary fashion (§ 73).

Hence, *koinonia* is a *Leitbegriff* for both Lutherans and Roman Catholics in their ecclesiology (§ 74-83). Problems arise when this concept is applied to church structures (understanding of the local church and questions on oversight and primacy). These problems anticipate the key chapter on the church as recipient and mediator of salvation. Here the 'real' issues and controversies are at stake, circling around the basic ecclesiological assumption that the church is under the verdict of the 'already' and 'not yet' of the kingdom of God or the final consummation

208 Cf. § 50.

of God's purpose with the world. The 'already' and the 'not yet' define the church both as place of God's saving activity and as not identical to the final kingdom. Both Lutherans and Roman Catholics agree on this. The 'not yet' implies a certain distance between church and salvation, at least dependency. The church depends on salvation and in this dependency it receives salvation and is an assembly of salvation. The 'already' implies a closer connection between church and salvation - the church as anticipation/'sacrament' of the coming kingdom - and so the church can act as mediator of what it receives, as an ambassador of salvation. Although the church is not possessor or controller of salvation the question is to what extent the church can be mediator of salvation without obscuring its dependency, or to what extent the church is recipient without diminishing the reality of God's salvation.

As *creatura evangelii* the church is committed to serving the gospel. Thus the church is recipient and mediator of salvation... The church shows itself to be a *koinônia* founded in the life of the triune God from which it receives life and salvation, and the church imparts life and salvation in faithfulness to its task of mission, which it has received from God (§ 107).

In church history these two aspects, recipient and mediator of salvation, have functioned as denoting the Lutheran and Roman Catholic emphasis respectively in the understanding of the church; these different accents have led to serious and qualitative differences in various fields of ecclesiology. It is important to note that in the report both aspects are considered as inseparable aspects of being church; "it is one and the same church which we speak of as recipient and mediator of salvation" (§ 108). This relativizes the differences whereas they may reflect one or the other understanding, but nonetheless they can be kept together within one view of the church. When the document speaks of the church as *congregatio fidelium* this might reflect more the Lutheran understanding, but it is by no means an exclusive Lutheran understanding. And similarly, when the church is called 'sacrament' of salvation this is not only a particular Roman Catholic view, although it must be said that Lutherans are more reluctant to speak about church as 'sacrament' than Roman Catholics about the church as *congregatio fidelium*.

With regard to the church as *congregatio fidelium* the report concludes that

both Lutherans and Catholics understand the church as the assembly of the faithful or saints which lives from God's word and the sacraments. Seen thus, the church is the fruit of God's saving activity, the community of his truth, his life and his love. Christ who acts in his saving word and sacrament, confronts the church which is the recipient of his and the Holy Spirit's activity. The presence of Christ marks the church as the place where salvation takes place. The gift of salvation however becomes the task and mission of the church as the community which has received salvation (§ 117).

The understanding of the church as 'sacrament' is related to The Catholic View (heading 4.2.2; § 120)²⁰⁹ and points to "the universal mission of the church and its radical dependence on Christ" (§ 122). The church is a sign and instrument of God's grace, of salvation, an instrument that of itself can do nothing. Only as recipient can the church be sign and instrument, 'sacrament' to the world. The objective efficacy of the word (audible sign) and sacraments (visible word) in the church leads Lutherans as well to state that the church itself "is in a derivative sense an instrument of salvation... it is the place where people participate in salvation" (§ 126). Nevertheless, Lutherans have some questions regarding the understanding of the church as 'sacrament', in particular its ecclesiological consequences: church as 'sacrament' must be distinguished from the way 'sacrament' is applied to baptism and eucharist; and how does church as 'sacrament' relate to its being at the same time holy and sinful? So again the statement is made that

209 References are made to *Lumen Gentium* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

in the light of the doctrine of justification... the church owes its existence and activity solely to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ and to the breath of the Spirit... God's eschatological promise of grace really determines the church's activity and guides it from within, and... salvation thus appears palpably in history. Nevertheless it must be evident that salvation can never be effected by human beings or be at their disposal, but even in the activity of the church it remains the gift of God (§ 133).

The discussion on the church as recipient and mediator of salvation continues in a discussion on the hidden and visible church, and on the holy and/or sinful church. In both issues both parties come to an agreement: the church as an object of faith exists in a hidden way "because as work of God it is unrecognizable by earthly standards, and because sin... makes ascertaining its membership uncertain" (§ 147), but at the same time God's saving activity takes place in an audible and visible ecclesial community; and: "the church's abiding in truth should not be understood in a static way but as dynamic event which takes place with the aid of the Holy Spirit in ceaseless battle against error and sin in the church as well as in the world" (§ 159)²¹⁰. Here, however, there are some Lutheran questions regarding the consequences of the abiding in truth of the church, in particular where the abiding in truth seems to be objectified in certain ecclesial offices and decisions.

The most important section of the report is that on the significance of the doctrine of justification for the understanding of the church, not only because it is the longest one, but also because it pertains to the original intention of the third phase. The main problem throughout the report is how the church relates to the reality of God's salvation. Is the church more actively on the side of God's salvation or more passively on the side of the human predicament? Are the church and its structures more under the verdict of the 'already' or of the 'not yet' of salvation? Is the church more object or subject of salvation? Hence questions about the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation. These questions have been answered in a way that God's salvation comes first and generates the church and only in this manner the church can become mediator of salvation. We have also seen that these answers are not totally satisfying, in particular for Lutherans, because they ask questions to what extent the church is mediator. These questions return in the section on justification, however in a concentrated way because the Lutheran identification of the gospel of salvation with the doctrine of justification, not only as interpretative concept but "both as center and criterion of all theology" (§ 167), including ecclesiology, explicitly comes to the surface. Of course, it had already played its role during the discussion of the issues so far. But now Roman Catholics explicitly ask whether the Lutheran understanding of justification does not diminish the reality of the church, whereas Lutherans ask whether "the Catholic understanding of church does not obscure the gospel as the doctrine of justification explicates it" (§ 166). The criteriological function of justification is at stake, the question whether practices, structures and theologies of the church help or hinder the proclamation of the gospel.

First of all the report acknowledges three common basic convictions (1) the gospel is an external word: the church lives from this gospel and it is heard in the church; (2) the gospel is a creative word: the church itself is God's creation; (3) the gospel is an abiding word: the church will continue in existence and there are structures which contribute to this continuity.

So justification as criterion and church as subordinate to this criterion does not imply that church and gospel are always in conflict with each other, compete with each other or are in complete opposition. They belong together. Nevertheless there are four areas in which the relationship between justification and church has to be discussed, because in those areas in

210 Quote from the *Malta Report* § 23.

particular Lutherans ask whether Roman Catholic institutions comply with the Lutheran and Roman Catholic consensus that God's salvation in Christ may not be obscured or hindered by any human involvement.

The first area affects the institutional continuity of the church. It is agreed that "all institutions or structural elements of church continuity are and remain instruments of the gospel, which alone creates and sustains the church..." (§ 180). Therefore one must always be heedful of the fact that the signs and instruments of institutional continuity remain servants of the gospel, even when they are thought to be ecclesially indispensable and binding.

The second issue, the ordained ministry as institution of the church is dealt with in a similar way. It is agreed that the ordained ministry is abidingly constitutive for the church²¹¹ precisely in the light of the doctrine of justification. However, even then, it continues to be necessary that the gospel remains the criterion for the self-understanding and actions of the ministry (§ 190). Problems arise when the historically developed formation of the episcopate, be it with the help of the Holy Spirit, plays a part in "determining the very being of the church" (§ 192). The Lutheran concern is that

putting episcopacy on such a level endangers the unconditional nature of the gift of salvation and its reception... For this unconditionality necessarily implies that only that may be considered necessary for the church which is already given by Jesus Christ himself as means of salvation. If ecclesial structures, which emerged in history, are elevated to that level, they become pre-conditions for receiving salvation and so... are put illegitimately on the same level with the gospel proclaimed in word and sacrament which alone is necessary for salvation and the church (§ 192).

The Roman Catholic approach is different because it put more emphasis on the 'incarnation' of God's will in human history. They see a

'divine institution' in the organization of the ministry as it has developed through history, i.e. a development led, willed and testified to by divine providence (§ 195).

Therefore the episcopate and the apostolic succession as the orderly transmission of the ordained ministry

are essential for the church as church, and so are necessary and indispensable. Nevertheless word and sacrament are the two pillars of the church which are necessary for salvation. The episcopate and apostolic succession stand in service as ministry to what is necessary for salvation (§ 196).

The difference in the evaluation of episcopate, as necessary or 'only' important lays in a different understanding of the correlation of church and salvation, the ecclesial significance for salvation. Hence the question is not whether some elements of the church are more subordinate to the criterion of justification in the Lutheran view than in the Roman Catholic. Both hold on to the judging character of the doctrine of justification in all aspects of ecclesiology. The question is about the interpretation of justification as criterion. If Roman Catholics say that the episcopate is indispensable and necessary for the church this does not mean indispensable and necessary for the salvation of individual persons. The episcopal office is understood in the church as a necessary ministry of the gospel which itself is necessary for salvation. Thus church and salvation are differentiated. For Lutherans salvation and church are much more a unity in the sense that something can only be necessary for the church if it is necessary for salvation. So the proclamation of the word and sacraments as necessary for salvation are thus necessary for the church to be church. Consequently the problem is the Roman Catholic understanding of the

211 Quote from *The Ministry in the Church* § 18.

eucharist celebrated in Lutheran churches as not having preserved the genuine and total reality of the Eucharistic mystery, because of a lack of the sacrament of orders, according to Vatican II²¹². Again the Roman Catholic position shows an important differentiation between church and salvation when it is stated that

an ecclesiology focused on the concept of succession, as held in the Catholic Church, need in no way deny the saving presence of the Lord in a eucharist celebrated by Lutheran (§ 203).

Therefore the different evaluation of the historical episcopate is interpreted in a way that the doctrine of justification is no longer at stake and that full communion in the episcopate is possible.

The third area pertains to binding church doctrine and the teaching function of the ministry. Again the difficulties lay in the different accents of the church as recipient and mediator of salvation. The Lutheran problem is not whether the church is a teaching church - it is! - but whether the gospel has primacy over the church with regard to the teaching function of the ministry. Not only because human beings are capable of error but also because "a sovereignty and ultimate binding force would attach to the decisions and stipulations of this ministry and its representatives which are reserved for the gospel alone" (§ 212). Roman Catholics acknowledge the difficulties but believe that the church is guided by the Holy Spirit into the truth and preserved from error. This means that the church can make infallible decisions which "explicate the revelation that has taken place once for all, and are made in harmony with the faith of the entire people of God, certainly not against them" (§ 218). Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that our knowledge is fragmentary, and that a dogmatic statement does not imply the end of asking questions: "Abiding in the truth of the gospel does not exclude the painstaking quest for the truth" (§ 221). Therefore Roman Catholics and Lutherans agree that binding teaching need not contradict justification (§ 222). "Even if Catholics cannot in the same way appropriate the Lutheran dialectic... they too are aware of the provisional nature of human knowledge of the truth" (§ 222).

The fourth and last problem relates to the church's jurisdiction and the jurisdictional function of the ministry. It is partly an overlap of the former question. Both Lutherans and Roman Catholics believe that "no church legislation can claim to be binding in such a manner that it is necessary for salvation, thus equalling the ultimate binding nature of the gospel which itself is the binding nature of grace" (§ 228). The task of the church is to serve the salvation of the individual (§ 241).

The chapter concludes by stating that

we may not speak of a fundamental conflict or even opposition between justification and the church. This is quite compatible with the role of the doctrine of justification in seeing that all the church's institutions, in their self-understanding and exercise, contribute to the church's abiding truth of the gospel which alone in the Holy Spirit creates and sustains the church (§ 242).

In the last chapter on the Mission and Consummation of the Church we again observe the scheme of salvation and the role of the church as recipient and mediator of salvation. Both in a salvation-historical and a trinitarian sense the church, as a pilgrim people, is on its way to the final consummation. God's kingdom is the most important eschatological concept of salvation here. Since it has not yet arrived, we do not fully participate in the *koinonia* of the Triune God. It is the missionary task of the church to proclaim the gospel and to serve God and humanity in

212 *Unitatis Redintegratio* 22.

the certainty of God's mercy and grace till the Lord returns. It is interesting to note that here the notion of reconciliation is one of the prime concepts for the role of the church. In the context of the many challenges that confront the churches - like racism, militant Islam, extreme ethnic and national allegiances, differences between the poor and the rich, religious alienation in secularized context - they are called to the ministry of reconciliation (§ 249.255.281; cf. also § 40) and to an attitude and behaviour like that of Christ. "In obedience to him who affirmed the Creator's will for the world, we must contribute to its preservation and well-being". The existing separation between Lutherans and Roman Catholics is considered as an obstacle for the credibility of this ministry of reconciliation, which urges the churches to strive for unity. Both parties affirm that the call to the ministry of reconciliation is the sharing in God's activity in the world. Although this participation is real it is also limited because "God's activity in the world goes beyond the sphere of the church" (§ 263). It is the Lutheran teaching of the two Kingdoms and the Roman Catholic teaching on the proper autonomy of earthly affairs that relate to this divine work apart from the church. Christians should therefore together with all people of good will serve humanity by championing human dignity and inalienable and inviolable human rights.

All the differences in accents or the differentiated consensus, which are caused by the view of the church as recipient and mediator of salvation, are clarified in terms of its eschatological consummation. As *sanctorum communio* the church is a community that goes beyond time and place and finds its end in God. As sign and instrument of the kingdom the church awaits the kingdom.

The church is the place where the reign of God has already dawned, and thus is a recipient of salvation. But at the same time it is also an instrument and sign for the reign which God himself implements, and thus is the mediator of salvation (§ 304).

Conclusions

- (1) (2) The understanding of the realization of salvation is based on the Christ-event as totality, although the life - the proclamation of the kingdom in word and deed - death and resurrection of Christ are more important than the incarnation, which hardly plays a role in the document. Salvation depends on God's work in history, in Israel, in Jesus Christ and in the church until the consummation. Christ is the Messiah in whom the unique saving event has dawned. In this salvation historical approach the 'human' side of Christ seems to be subsumed by the trinitarian interpretation of his person and work. For example, in the description of the way to the cross there is no attention paid to the Gethsemane experiences of Christ and the hesitations he had in being obedient. The report speaks of the unwavering trust of Christ and his chosen path to his death.
- (3) The report *Church and Justification* is a report about the church, in particular about its relation to the doctrine of justification as its criterion. Although there are substantial parts of the report about the church which do not even mention the doctrine of justification, it is clear from the outset that what is said about the church as founded in the Christ-event and as *koinonia* is dominated by the criteriological function of the justification doctrine. Ecclesiology in the light of salvation history (ch. ii) and in the light of communion with the Trinity (ch. iii) is characterized by, respectively, the 'already' and 'not yet' of the kingdom and the sharing but not yet full participation in God's being. This anticipates the crucial question how the church can reflect the 'already'

and must refer to the 'not yet' and reflect the real, but provisional participation in God. In other words: what is the criterion which decides to what extent the church is part of the salvific involvement of God in his world? The criterion of the report is that the gospel precedes the church and thus the latter is both recipient and, as recipient, mediator of salvation. On the one hand the whole church, in all its aspects, must show that it depends on the gospel and does not possess it; on the other hand, instrumentally, the church is called to serve the gospel. To state this in a dialectic way: the church is only church if it serves the gospel in dependency and if it depends on the gospel in service. Both Roman Catholics and Lutherans affirm this criterion. Therefore, all the difficulties and controversies remain within the category of questions on the degree of dependency on and service to the gospel of salvation. How is this criterion to be used? Roman Catholics are more inclined to emphasize the reality of the church as servant of the gospel of salvation ('sacrament'), whereas Lutherans tend to stress the dependency of the church on the gospel. Roman Catholics distinguish between what is necessary for the church and what is necessary for salvation. Lutherans do not make this distinction. Both tendencies remain within the common conviction that the church is both recipient and mediator of salvation. Therefore the nuanced consensus on the doctrine of justification has proved itself ecclesiological in a nuanced way²¹³.

- (4) Justification is the prime soteriological concept used in this dialogue. Lutherans and Roman Catholics agree on the meaning of justification (*Malta, Justification by Faith*). However, "a consensus in the doctrine of justification - even if it is nuanced - must prove itself ecclesiological" (§ 2). There is no discussion in the report as to whether justification is a useful concept for the understanding of salvation. It is explicitly stated that the way justification is used in the report "is not primarily a matter of how the saving event can be rightly described and how God communicates his righteousness to the sinner" (§ 167) because this has no immediate critical implications for ecclesiology. This is understandable insofar as preceding dialogues between Roman Catholics and Lutherans pointed to justification as a problem in the sense of its criteriological place in church and theology and not in the sense of its expressing God's salvation for humanity. It is less understandable if concentration on salvation as justification and a further concentration on justification as criterion for the instrumentality of the church leads away from the ongoing question how we should understand salvation. Hence we see the direction of a movement in this Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue opposite to the direction of the movement of ARCIC II. Here the implications of justification are extended from *an* interpretation of salvation for both Lutherans and Roman Catholics to *the* criteriological principle which underlies all doctrines. There ARCIC II tried to return to the biblical-theological proportions of the justification concept. It is not by chance that, whereas *Church and Justification* is full of biblical references in the statements about the church, there are significantly fewer Bible quotes in the section on justification as criterion and many more references to Vatican II and Luther. Only in the chapter on the mission of the church is there wider attention given to challenges to the church in its proclamation of the gospel of salvation. Precisely here the concept of justification as a doctrine is absent, whereas reconciliation seems to be a more appropriate term to describe the content of the gospel.

213 H. Meyer, 'Kirche und Rechtfertigung: Zum Schlußbericht der dritten Phase des internationalen Katholisch/Lutherischen Dialogs', *MD* 4 (1994) 72. This conclusion, however, is contested by his Lutheran colleague A. Birmelé, cf. A. Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale: Progrès œcuménique et enjeux méthodologiques*, Paris-Genève (Cerf/Labor & Fides) 2000, 95.

2.4 The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, 1998: *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*

Following the third phase (1986-1993) (see above), the fourth phase of the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue began in 1995. At its first meeting in Finland, the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity decided to focus on 'Apostolicity' in the meetings to come. Moreover, the Commission planned to summarize the results of the talks on the eucharist during the previous phases and on ethical questions, a recently developed field in bilateral dialogues²¹⁴. In the meantime the urge was felt to have the results of the dialogues held so far officially judged by the respective church authorities in order to make progress in the process of union²¹⁵. In particular the degree of convergence on the doctrine of justification had been substantially increased but had never been officially received. In the early stages of the third phase (1986-1993) the so-called 'platform-statement' or Versailles paper on justification had already circulated among dialogue participants but it had never received official status²¹⁶ due to a reservation of three Lutheran participants. During the reception process of the German dialogue *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era* but in particular due to the continuing work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) on the basis of the platform-statement, it was felt in the LWF that thoughts of these documents should be available to other member churches²¹⁷. In 1993 this eventually resulted in the plan to set up a working group together with the PCPCU to formulate a consensus paper²¹⁸. In 1994 in the course of two meetings (Geneva and Rome) this working group prepared a text which was revised three times. The first revision took place among the staff of the PCPCU and that of the LWF. This led to the first draft, the so-called Geneva text, in January 1995. Not officially published²¹⁹ it was sent to all member churches of the LWF and the PCPCU for examination and approval. It evoked a period of intense discussions, in particular in Germany²²⁰. The discussions lead to a second revision in 1996, the so-called Würzburg Text²²¹, which again was submitted to the LWF member churches and the PCPCU. A third and final revision was necessary (Würzburg January 1997)²²². Finally, the Würzburg II text was published in

214 Cf. the press communiqué 'Apostolicity is focus of next phase in Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue', *LWI* 17 (1995) 8; also 'Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, Lärkkulla, Finland, September 10-16, 1995', *ISer* 89/3-4 (1995) 95-96. The second meeting took place in Rottenburg, 1996 (*ISer* 92 (1996/II) 106-107, the third in Dobogóko, Hungary, 1997 *ISer* 95 1997/II-III, 109, the fourth in Kamien Slaski, Poland, 1998 (*ISer* 98 (1998/III) 163-164, the fifth in Tutzing, Germany, 1999 (*ISer* 102 (1999/IV) 247-248).

215 Cf. the remarks of the PCPCU concerning Church and Justification in: 'Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council, November 13-18, 1995', *ISer* 91/1-2 (1996), 32.

216 Cf. O.H. Pesch, *Die 'Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre': Entstehung - Inhalt - Bedeutung - Konsequenzen*, Vortrag vom 13. Januar 1998, Karl Rahner Akademie Köln, http://kath.de/akademie/rahner/Download/Vortraege/inhalt-online/_pesch-rechtfertigung.html.

217 For a thorough introduction into the history of the *Joint Declaration* cf. Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 103-125. Also D. Wendebourg, 'Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der gemeinsamen Erklärung', *ZThK Beiheft* 10 (1998) 140-206; Th. Dieter, 'Aufhebung der Lehrverurteilungen: Zum Stand des römisch-katholisch/lutherischen Dialogs', lecture held at the 9th scientific Consultation of Societas Oecumenica, Strasbourg, August 24-29 1996; and from the perspective of the PCPCU: 'Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council, November 13-18, 1995', *ISer* 91/1-2 (1996), 34.

218 Its participants were George Tavard (USA), Lothar Ullrich (Germany) and Heinz-Albert Raem (PCPCU) on the Roman Catholic side and John Reumann (USA), Harding Meyer (Germany) and Eugene Brand (LWB) on the Lutheran side.

219 Officially the text and its modified versions were not meant to be published, but in the meantime after accusations of "secret diplomacy" the original text was published in Finnish and German (in the series *Texte aus der VELKD* 65 (1996) and in: 'Konsens in Sicht?: Der Entwurf einer lutherisch-katholischen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre', *Herder-Korrespondenz* 50/6 (1996) 302-306).

220 Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 107-108.

221 Cf. 'Final Decision on Joint Declaration on Justification by end 1998: Draft of Lutheran-Roman Catholic Declaration has to be revised again', *LWI* 19 (1996) 3.

222 Some people involved in the process, like H. Meyer, Lutheran member of the working group, and O.H. Pesch, Roman Catholic expert in this field, doubt whether the text of Würzburg II was really an amelioration of the former Würzburg text. Otto Hermann Pesch, *Die 'Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre': Entstehung - Inhalt - Bedeutung - Konsequenzen*, Vortrag vom 13. Januar 1998, Karl Rahner Akademie Köln (published on internet).

1997²²³. The controversy that resulted in Germany, in particular in the columns of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*²²⁴ was vehement²²⁵ and official reactions from the Lutheran²²⁶ and in particular from the Roman Catholic side²²⁷ made it necessary to add an Annex that elucidated the consensus reached in the *Joint Declaration*²²⁸. On October 31st, 1999 in Augsburg, Germany, officials from both the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification²²⁹.

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church (*JD*) incorporates (1) the Joint Declaration itself, consisting of 44 numbered paragraphs, (2) the Annex, consisting of 9 paragraphs numbered and lettered, (3) the Clarification on the Doctrine of Justification written by the Roman Catholic Church and issued on June 22, 1999, and (4) the Presentation of the Joint Declaration, composed of a few paragraphs of introduction by Cardinal Cassidy, head of the Pontifical Commission on Ecumenism. The *Joint Declaration* depends to a large extent on previous dialogue documents, in particular on the international *Malta Report* (1972) and the report *Church and Justification* (1993), and the regional reports *Justification by Faith* (USA, 1983) and *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era* (Germany, 1986)²³⁰.

The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* is the remarkable result of three decades of dialogue between the Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic church. As the *Joint Declaration* states, it is not the product of a new dialogue on justification, but an attempt "to take stock and to summarize the results of the dialogues on justification so that our churches may be informed about the overall results... and thereby enabled to make binding decisions" (§ 4). Its particularity lays in its content, but even more in its status. The conviction that an agreement on justification was possible developed right from the beginning of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue (see the *Malta Report*). The importance of the *Joint Declaration* is that the agreement, as the result of a process of recapitulation, modification and elucidation, proceeded from an interesting, but rather little known work by Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians, to an official ecclesial statute and authority which marks an important step towards mutual recognition by both churches. The paradox of this ecumenical effort towards reconciliation is that precisely its status initially caused a somewhat irreconcilable atmosphere between theologians and an immense number of positive and negative reactions during the process of its completion, in particular from German side. Some of these reactions were to the point, whereas others showed an obvious lack of knowledge about the long process of discussions that has led to the *Joint Declaration*²³¹.

223 Full text in *ISer* 98 (1998/III) 81-86; *Appendix*, 86-90.

224 Cf. Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 115-116 note 1. He denounces the methods used by the *FAZ* to discredit the intentions of the *Joint Declaration*. Cf. the opposing reaction of E. Jüngel in his Preface to the first edition of *Das Evangelium von der Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen als Zentrum des Christlichen Glaubens: Ein theologische Studie in ökumenischer Absicht*, Tübingen (Mohr/Siebeck) 1999 (3rd improved edition), XIV. Cf. also the 24 volumes of the German *EPD* between autumn 1997 and the end of 1999.

225 Cf. Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 114-125.

226 'Response by the LWF', *ISer* 98 (1998/III) 90-93.

227; 'Response of the Catholic Church to the *Joint Declaration*', *ISer* 98 (1998/III) 93-95.

228 "With reference to the Resolution on the Joint Declaration by the Council of the Lutheran World Federation of 16 June 1998 and the response to the Joint Declaration by the Catholic Church of 25 June 1998 and to the questions raised by both of them, the annexed statement (called 'Annex') further substantiates the consensus reached in the Joint Declaration" *Official Common Statement by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church* § 2. The Annex (*Annex to the Official Common Statement*) was published in *ISer* 103/2-3 (2000) 4-6. Cf. also the positive reactions of E. Jüngel towards the Annex ("ein Anhang von Gewicht, ja, von ganz erheblichem theologischem Gewicht") in the *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, nr 23, 4 juni 1999.

229 Gross/Meyer/Rusch, *Growth in Agreement II*, 566-582.

230 Cf. the *Joint Declaration Appendix Resources for the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.

231 Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 118 states: "Le fait que peu de théologiens allemands aient été impliqués dans la rédaction de la DCJ (= *Joint Declaration*, RL) et plus généralement dans les dialogues récents - une absence souvent due au refus de théologiens allemands de s'engager davantage dans le travail œcuménique international - amplifia la protestation."

The *Joint Declaration* consists of five parts, preceded by an introduction (§ 1-7). The first part is called *Biblical Message of Justification* (§ 8-12). The second, short section is named *The Doctrine of Justification as Ecumenical Problem* (§ 13). § 14-18 are titled *The Common Understanding of Justification*. By far the largest section, four (§ 19-39), is consecrated to *Explicating the Common Understanding of Justification* and the final paragraphs (§ 40-44), part five, are called *The Significance and Scope of the Consensus Reached*.

The *Joint Declaration* takes its starting position in the past. In the first line it states: "The doctrine of justification was of central importance for the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century" (§ 1). From here it delineates in a few lines the distinctive position and value of the doctrine for Lutherans and Roman Catholics in Reformation times, and the mutual condemnations issued by both churches. It concludes stating that: "these condemnations are still valid today and thus have a church-dividing effect" (§ 1). There is, so to speak, a juridical heritage (valid condemnations) of the past, which is an obstacle to church unity. But there is also a contemporary aspect in content: "For the Lutheran tradition, the doctrine of justification has retained its special status" (§ 2). The Roman Catholic position is not mentioned here. Having drawn the present day position, the major goal of the *Joint Declaration* is threefold: (1) "...to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ (§ 5) through "a consensus on basic truths on the doctrine of justification" (§ 5), (2) to apply this consensus on basic truths by showing that "the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations" (§ 5) and (3) finally to conclude that "in light of this consensus, the corresponding doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century do not apply to today's partner..." (§13).

The way this consensus is reached refers to *Church and Justification* in which the method of "differentiated consensus" already was used. It means that one affirms what can be said together, which is necessary for church unity and which in the meantime leaves room for the possibility of accentuating differently and for further theological elaborations that cannot be harmonized but that does not "destroy the basic consensus regarding the basic truths" (§ 40).

This consensus has become possible, as the *Joint Declaration* says, because of new insights to which the churches have come (§ 7). The first new insight is the result of the "common way of listening to the word of God in Scripture" (§ 8). It is said that the good news ("the gift of salvation" (§ 9)) is set forth in Holy Scripture in various ways. Little attention is paid to Old Testament themes²³², moreover they have particularly negative connotations: sinfulness, disobedience, righteousness and judgement. The text proceeds by referring to some New Testament treatments of 'righteousness' and 'justification', concluding with the remark that

in Paul's letters also, the gift of salvation is described in various ways, among others: "for freedom God has set us free"..., "reconciled to God"..., "peace with God"..., "new creation"..., "alive to God in Jesus Christ"..., or "sanctified in Jesus Christ"... Chief among these is the "justification" of sinful human beings by God's grace through faith (Rom 3,23-25), which came into particular prominence in the Reformation period (§ 9).

From here the largest number of new biblical insights is devoted to references related to

²³² The Geneva text already provoked some reactions regarding the use of biblical quotations, in particular their juxtaposition without coherent interpretation and the lack of Old Testament references, cf. Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 109. Later on the biblical part was criticized from the German side, although Birmelé relativizes the criticism and relates it to a kind of German frustration due to the lack of German involvement in the preparations of the *Joint Declaration*, Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 118.

justification taken from the letters of Paul, particularly to his letter to the Romans and to a smaller extent to his letter to the Galatians²³³.

These new biblical insights, augmented with "modern investigations of the history of theology and dogma" (§ 13) - that are not elaborated as such in the *Joint Declaration*, but play an important role in chapter 4 - have led to a "notable convergence concerning justification" (§ 13), which made it possible to formulate "a consensus on basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification" (§ 13). This consensus on basic truths, which is compatible with differing explications, is formulated in four paragraphs.

(1) justification is the work of the triune God (§ 15)

(2) salvation in Christ is received in faith as a gift of the triune God (§ 16)

(3) in a special way the message of justification points to the heart of the New Testament message

(4) the doctrine of justification is an indispensable criterion in church life and teaching.

The paragraphs § 15 and § 16 refer to the material consensus and can be summarized by the statement:

Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work, and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God, and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works (§ 15)²³⁴.

The two following paragraphs refer to the place of the message of justification within the New Testament and the place of the doctrine of justification in the church.

We also share the conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God's saving action in Christ: it tells us that as sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way (§ 17). Therefore the doctrine of justification... is an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ (§ 18).

From here the *Joint Declaration* continues by explaining the common understanding as mentioned above. Seven issues are mentioned and structured in a threefold way: a common confession (we confess together...), followed by a rather *konfessionskundliche* exposition of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic points of view (five times) or by the Roman Catholic and Lutheran points of view (two times). The topics of (1) co-operation, (2) justification as forgiveness and/or making righteous, (3) faith, (4) the 'simul iustus ac peccator', (5) law and gospel, (6) assurance, (7) and good works²³⁵ show both the basic consensus and the remaining differences within the consensus.

Finally, as the double movement showed at the beginning of the *Joint Declaration*, the consensus in basic truths is mentioned a third time (§ 40) as well as the non-application of the

233 In two and a half lines attention is paid to a few Old Testament themes (sinfulness, disobedience, righteousness and judgment), in 1,5 line the text refers to some general New Testament treatments of 'righteousness' and 'justification' From here thirty lines are almost entirely devoted to references to the letters of Paul, particularly to Romans and to a smaller extent to Galatians.

234 Here a footnote refers to the 1980 dialogue text *All Under One Christ* (§ 14) which says: "it is solely by grace and by faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit in us that we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit who renews our hearts and equips us for and calls us to good works", Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 243.

235 Cf. the six points that were discussed in the USA document: (1) forensic justification; (2) sinfulness of the justified; (3) sufficiency of faith; (4) merit; (5) satisfaction; and (6) criteria of authenticity.

mutual condemnations (§ 41). Neither is regarded as an end in itself but as a fruitful basis for further talks. "Here it must prove itself" (§ 43) in different kinds of ecclesiological or church related topics.

The approach, like that of many other dialogues, is trinitarian. "Justification is the work of the triune God" (§ 15). The 'objective' side of the trinitarian work is not under discussion. The terminology used is not specified. The Father is the handling person through the Son. His saving work is summarized as "incarnation, death and resurrection" (§ 15) in which we share through the Holy Spirit. The state of non-salvation is mainly described with the term sin. "The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners" (§ 15). The message of justification "...tells us that as sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way" (§ 17). Many concepts that are used have a juridical connotation like God's judgment, merit (§ 19), conversion and penance (§ 28). The effect of justification is twofold: forgiveness of sins and renewal.

The main soteriological concept in the *Joint Declaration* is, it will be no surprise, justification. Nevertheless, some other biblical concepts are mentioned, called the 'various ways' in which the Bible speaks of 'the good news' (§ 8) or the 'various ways' in which the letters of Paul describe 'the gift of salvation' (§ 9). The role of mentioning these 'various' ways is not made clear. It suggests a certain terminological pluralism, but at the same time there is a hierarchy in this plurality, because "chief among these is the 'justification' of sinful human beings by God's grace through faith (Rom. 3,23-25), which came into particular prominence in the Reformation period" according to § 9. Whether this prominence is the cause or the consequence of its being 'chief' is not explained, nor is it clear whether this hierarchy and variety hints to the 'criterion' issue later on in § 17 and § 18. There it is stated that

we share the conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God's saving action in Christ: it tells us that as sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way (§ 17).

We understand this phrase in this way: the message of justification points to the heart of the Christian message because it expresses the *sola gratia* aspect of God's salvific action. Our salvation is first and foremost the result of God's initiative. It is not just a proclamation ("tells us...", "forgiveness") but it is also a renewing force for the believer. This *sola gratia* aspect is an important aspect in Christian soteriology; therefore the text speaks of "a special way". As Birmelé emphasizes, the intention here is to underline the Lutheran concern that the message of justification is the "key that makes sense of all the utterances made and of the whole life of the church"²³⁶. It is the summary of the Biblical proclamation of Christ, not just a concept among others. The problem to which he refers himself is that in the *Joint Declaration* the New Testament references, particularly in § 9, all refer to a particular part of the Bible, i.e. the letters of Paul. He calls this an unlucky ambiguity. If this is the case, one could at least ask why during the succeeding versions of the *Joint Declaration* not a greater effort was made to adjust the biblical references to this part of the consensus. The more because this biblical part was already subject to severe criticism in the former versions of the *Joint Declaration*. Or

236 "... que la justification n'est pas un enseignement parmi d'autres mais la clé qui donne sens à toute parole et à toute vie ecclésiale", Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 140. Elsewhere he says that "pour les luthériens la justification, comprise au sens large et non réduite à une conception seulement paulienne, est synonyme de salut" (italics, RL), 188. Pesch refers to Roman Catholics who "do not understand that the 'doctrine of justification' is nothing but the formal summary of the proclamation of Christ".

does this ambiguity precisely reveal that the Lutheran tradition of speaking of justification as the overall term for salvation does not fit smoothly in the totality of the biblical message concerning salvation? Of course, the Lutheran tradition does not intend to reduce the biblical message of salvation to (some of) the Pauline letters and their message of justification, neither has the *Joint Declaration* this intention. Nevertheless, the way the biblical references are used, suggests the opposite of what the Lutheran position wishes to express. The problem concerning the heart of the New Testament is concentrated precisely here²³⁷. Do we do justice to the heart of the New Testament, not to speak of the whole of the Bible, to put it on the same level with the message of justification or is it an important part of the heart? When the text of the *Joint Declaration* states that "the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God's saving action in Christ" one could be inclined to see this as an important reference, not as an exclusive one, similar to the part on the biblical references. Birmelé rejects this interpretation of the text²³⁸. In fact, the *Joint Declaration* does not take position in this ambiguity; at least one could say that it suggests that it puts the reader on the wrong track as far as the biblical references are concerned²³⁹.

When we leave the question about the place and function of the biblical references behind us, we see that in the *Joint Declaration* the doctrine of justification is predominantly regarded in the more 'Lutheran way', namely justification as a comprehensive concept, interpreting the heart of the gospel. How comprehensive it is, is reflected in the section on its criteriological function. It says:

the doctrine of justification, which takes up this message and explicates it, is more than just one part of Christian doctrine. It stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all teaching and practice of our churches to Christ. When Lutherans emphasize the *unique* significance of this criterion, they do not deny the interrelation and significance of all truths of faith. When Catholics see themselves as bound by *several* criteria, they do not deny the special function of the message of justification. Lutherans and Catholics share the goal of confessing Christ in all things, who alone is to be trusted above all things as the one Mediator (1 Tim 2:5f) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts (§ 18) (*italics, RL*).

Deliberately the text speaks of 'an indispensable criterion'²⁴⁰. Both for Lutherans and Roman Catholics justification has to play a role in the teaching and the practice of the church. The question is not whether Roman Catholics do accept the criteriological function, but in what way. What is the status of the criterion? No decision is made in the text. Whether justification is the unique criterion or one out of several criteria is left open. For this reason this part of the text has been very vulnerable to criticism. The official Roman Catholic reaction from 25 June

237 Birmelé refers to the *Malta Report*. In the reactions to this Report the same problem was already noticed.

"Pour le catholicisme et pour de nombreux exégètes contemporains, la « justification » est un aspect important du message du salut proclamé par le Nouveau Testament, mais elle n'est que l'approche paulienne de ce message. La Réforme luthérienne du XVI^e siècle et dans sa foulée les Eglises luthériennes contemporaines utilisent généralement le term « justification » pour désigner l'ensemble du message sotériologique du New Testament », Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 140. He also refers (p. 141) to the internal discussion between him and H. Meyer with regard to his position in his earlier book *Le salut* and to the reactions from M.E. Brinkman and R. Lanooy in Lanooy, *For Us and Our Salvation*, 129 and 145-160.

238 Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 140.

239 The controversy between Bishop Walter Kasper and Eberhard Jüngel precisely shows this different understanding of justification. The former, like other Roman Catholics, considers justification as 'an' important criterion, and refers with regard to salvation to the richness of the New Testament message. Jüngel's reaction is to underline the paramount Lutheran point of view affirming the direct relationship between the centre of Scripture, the death and resurrection of Christ and the *articulus justificationis*.

240 This section of the text was subject to several changes and according to some theologians like Pannenberg and Birmelé, the former text was better than the final version.

1998²⁴¹ and many Lutheran reactions, in particular that of E. Jüngel, made it necessary to clarify the *Joint Declaration*. According to Jüngel an agreement on justification, without an accord on its criteriological function could not be a real agreement. The Roman Catholic response emphasized that the message of justification "has to be organically integrated into the fundamental criterion of the *regula fidei*"²⁴². The *Annex* formulated a manual for the *Joint Declaration* and the Roman Catholic response and clarifies the criterion issue as follows. On the one hand it is confirmed that

the doctrine of justification is measure and touchstone for the Christian faith. No teaching may contradict this criterion. In this sense, the doctrine of justification is an 'indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all teaching and practice of our churches to Christ' (*Annex* §3)²⁴³.

On the other hand the *Annex* says that the criterion "has its truth and specific meaning within the overall context of the church's fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith". For Jüngel the *Annex* was satisfactory as it showed precisely the way how the 'several criteria' were to be regarded, namely as references to "the overall context of the church's fundamental Trinitarian confession of faith". Birmelé takes a more relativizing position here. He, who already criticized the Lutherans who were responsible for the the *Malta Report* for being too indulgent regarding the unique and exclusive position of justification in the Lutheran tradition, holds that with regard to the criterion issue the *Annex* does not offer anything new compared to the *Joint Declaration*²⁴⁴. In the meantime he is positive because he regards the *Joint Declaration* as a possible and necessary step on a longer road²⁴⁵, although the criterion issue is not fully agreed upon.

From here, it is a small step to the question how justification is related to ecclesiological questions in the *Joint Declaration*. In other words: how the criteriological function of the doctrine works out in ecclesiological discussions? At the end of the *Joint Declaration* the remark is made that the consensus in basic truths

must come to influence the life and teachings of our churches. Here it must prove itself. In this respect, there are still questions of varying importance which need further clarification. These include, among other topics, the relationship between the Word of God and church doctrine, as well as ecclesiology, ecclesial authority, church unity, ministry, the sacraments, and the relation between justification and social ethics. We are convinced that the consensus we have reached offers a solid basis for this clarification (§ 43).

It is noteworthy to see that the report of the international dialogue *Church and Justification* started precisely with this remark, although it was published several years before: "a consensus in the doctrine of justification - even if it is nuanced - must prove itself ecclesologically" (§ 2). At the end of that dialogue Meyer concluded that the nuanced consensus on the doctrine of justification has proved itself ecclesologically in a nuanced way. The *Joint Declaration* and the profound discussions about the criterion aspect show that his conclusion was too far away from the mainstream theological consensus between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. In the meantime both *Church and Justification* and the *Joint Declaration* clearly show the follow-up in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. Every

241 'Response of the Catholic Church to the Joint Declaration of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification', *ISer* 98/3 (1998) 93-100.

242 'Response of the Catholic Church', § 2.

243 'Annex to the Official Common Statement', *ISer* 103/2-3 (2000) 4-6.

244 Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 186.

245 "The question of the criteriological function of the message of justification remains...open", Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 189.

attention will be given to ecclesiology.

Conclusions

- (1) (2) The essential value of the *Joint Declaration* lies in its official status. The consensus in the basic truths of the doctrine of justification is not the view of a smaller group of ecumenists any more, but is part and parcel of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic tradition. As a consequence the anathemas of the Reformation period do not apply any more to the respective teachings of both the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches. The report itself is not a breakthrough with regard to what it declares, but with regard to who declares it. Therefore when it comes to questions like 'who grants salvation?' and 'in what sense Christ plays a salvific role?' we do not find a great deal of new answers. The approach is trinitarian: Justification is the work of the triune God to save sinners based on the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. All people are called by God to salvation in Christ. Through the Holy Spirit they share in the righteousness of Christ in accord with the will of the Father. By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, all people are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works (§ 15).
- (3) More explicit than its predecessors did, the *Joint Declaration* confirms that, apart from the material agreement on the central concern of justification (salvation in Christ is received in faith as a gift of the triune God) and apart from its growing convergence on the criteriological function (the doctrine of justification is an indispensable criterion in church life and teaching), the crux of the discussion between Lutherans and Roman Catholics remains the application of the criterion. Both accept that the church's teachings and practices should be placed under the norm of the gospel, but its consequences are yet to be discovered. Future dialogues how this criteriological function works out ecclesiologically will prove its value. The essential question is what role the church plays in the appropriation of salvation.
- (4) Of course, justification is the main concept used to describe salvation. Other concepts are mentioned as well, especially from Paul's letters, like freedom, reconciliation, peace, new creation, sanctification, but they are considered as being part of a certain hierarchy in which justification is qualified as chief among these concepts. The *Joint Declaration* demonstrates the view that one cannot proceed towards unity if the past, the terminology of the past and of the tradition, remain unmentioned. The reception process has revealed that it has been the right choice to overcome this problem, handed over from the past, in the terminology of the past. In the meantime the reception process has shown as well that it is not enough to proceed in this way. The special status of the *Joint Declaration* and the attention it has caught within the churches have shown, maybe more than any other bilateral dialogue, that a *konfessionskundliche* approach has its limits. *Thé* Lutheran understanding of justification does not exist, nor does *thé* Roman Catholic one. Confessional borders are fluid and are subject to changes. The discussion around the *Joint Declaration* has urged Lutherans and Roman Catholics to reflect on their respective basic theological views on their understanding of justification. In the meantime it is unthinkable that this kind of self-reflection will lead to two precisely described points of view.

Chapter 3

The Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue, ARCIC II, 1987: *Salvation and the Church*

The roots of the current Anglican-Roman Catholic international dialogue go back to the Second Vatican Council, although contacts between Anglicans and Roman Catholics have existed throughout the centuries²⁴⁶. Actually, it was the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury M. Ramsey to Pope Paul VI in 1966²⁴⁷ that gave birth to the dialogue between the two churches. The two bishops agreed "to inaugurate ... a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, may lead to that unity in truth for which Christ prayed"²⁴⁸. A Joint Preparatory Commission published the so-called 'Malta Report: Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission, 1968'²⁴⁹, which contained an outline of basic agreements, and it recommended some future lines along which the dialogue could (and would) go, striving for full organic unity. In 1970 the Joint Permanent Commission, now renamed the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), came together for the first time. The eighteen members, nine appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in consultation with the Primates and Metropolitans of the Churches of the Anglican Communion, and nine by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, decided to focus on the three main themes, recommended by the *Malta Report*: Eucharist, Ministry and Authority. It was decided to deal with the subject of Mixed Marriages in a separate joint commission²⁵⁰.

ARCIC I completed its first series in 1981. Between 1970 and 1981 the commission met thirteen times and produced several reports which were brought together in the *Final Report* of 1982: 'Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine' (the so-called Windsor Statement, 1971)²⁵¹; 'Ministry and Ordination' (the so-called Canterbury Statement, 1973)²⁵²; and the 'Agreed Statement on Authority in the Church'

246 In 1896 Pope Leo XIII promulgated the apostolic letter *Apostolicae Curae* (1896) in which he declared Anglican ordinations to be 'absolutely null and utterly void'. At that time this event extinguished every hope of an imminent ecumenical encounter between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. Now the letter can be considered as the result of more than 350 years of estrangement between the two communities, but in a certain way as the end of that period as well. Already in the 19th century Anglicans had shown some interest in the Roman Catholic Church, and during the first half of the 20th century mutual interest increased, albeit mainly on a personal level. At least the letter had made clear where the differences between Anglicans and Catholics had to be pin-pointed. The issue of the Anglican ordinations focused on the question of the sacrificial understanding of the eucharist and the ministry. These two questions, together with the question of authority, would become the central issues in the international dialogue to come.

247 For the backgrounds of the three visits of the Archbishops of Canterbury cf. Edward Knapp-Fisher, *Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue and Three Archiepiscopal Visits to Rome*, London (The Archbishop of Canterbury's Counsellors on Foreign Relations) 1978.

248 'The Common Declaration by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury', Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 126; Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Final Report: Windsor, September 1981*, London (CTS/SPCK) 1982, 117-118; J.W. Witmer/J.R. Wright (ed), *Called to Full Unity: Documents on Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations 1966-1983*, Washington (USCC) 1986, 3-4.

249 Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 120-125; 'Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission', *OiC* 5/1 (1969) 27-34 and *OiC* 18/2 (1982) 166-172; A.C. Clark/C. Davey (ed), *Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue: The Work of the Preparatory Commission*, London (Oxford University Press) 1974, 107-115; *Final Report*, 108-116; Witmer/Wright, *Called to Full Unity*, 7-14.

250 The report of the commission is published in: Witmer/Wright, *Called to Full Unity*, 99-131.

251 Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 68-72; 'Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, Third Meeting, Windsor, 7th September 1971: Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine', *OiC* 8/1 (1972) 69-74; *Final Report*, 11-16; 'Most Important Statement Since Reformation for Anglicans and Catholics: Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine', *JES* 9/1 (1972) 222-226.

252 'Ministry and Ordination: Statement on the Doctrine of the Ministry Agreed by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: Canterbury 1973', *OiC* 10/1 (1974) 53-60; *ISer* 23/1 (1974) 16-19; *Final Report* 29-39; Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 78-84; *ET* 2/10 (1974) 1-7.

(the so-called Venice Statement, 1976)²⁵³. Questions about and criticisms of the Windsor and Canterbury statements were tackled in the 1979 Elucidation²⁵⁴. Problems, left unresolved in the third statement²⁵⁵, finally resulted in the second statement on authority. At its last meeting, in Windsor (1981), the commission agreed on the text of 'Authority in the Church II' (the so-called Windsor Statement). During the same meeting a clarifying text with regard to the first statement on authority was completed (Elucidation 1981), as well as the introduction of the *Final Report*, expounding the Commission's ecclesiology. In January 1982 the permission for publication of the complete *Final Report*²⁵⁶ was given²⁵⁷.

The 1982 Final Report ends with the remark that there is "much we have left others still to do" (Conclusion). In fact, it took only a few months until the initiative was taken to set up a second commission to do this work. Like in 1966, the Pope, John Paul II, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, inaugurated the new phase of dialogue. In May 1982 they met in Canterbury and declared that the end of the first series of talks called for "the next stage of our common pilgrimage of faith and hope towards unity for which we long" (Common Declaration (1982) § 258. This resulted in the second phase of the dialogue, ARCIC II which was concluded in 2005 and resulted in five reports. After four meetings²⁵⁹ the first report was published called *Salvation and the Church* (see below). Between

253 'Authority in the Church: A Statement on the Question of Authority, its Nature, Exercise, and Implications, Agreed by the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission', *OiC* 13/1-2 (1977) 147-160; 'Authority in the Church', *ISer* 32/3 (1976) 1-6; *Final Report*, 49-67; Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 88-99.

254 'Eucharistic Doctrine, Ministry and Ordination: Elucidations, Salisbury 1979, Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission', *OiC* 15/3 (1979) 238-248; *Final Report*, 17-25; 40-45; Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 72-77; 84-87.

255 Authority in the Church, § 24.

256 The *Final Report* is published in *OiC* 18/2 (1982) 141-166; *Final Report*, 1-100; *ISer* 49/2-3 (1982) 74-106; Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 61-118; Witmer/Wright, *Called to Full Unity*, 228-282; *ET* 11/10 (1982) 144-149.

257 One of the most significant characteristics of the *Final Report* is the claim that substantial agreement on eucharist and ministry has been reached. On the third issue of authority it is said that a degree of convergence has been realized. However, with regard to all three issues one states that "substantial agreement ... is now possible" (Introduction § 2). In the very same year of the publication of the *Final Report* the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith expressed its views on the text in some *Observations* ('Observations on the ARCIC Final Report' *Origins* 11/47 (1982) 752-756). The CDF stated that the *Final Report* "does not yet constitute a substantial and explicit agreement on some essential elements of Catholic faith" (756). At the 1988 Lambeth conference the Anglicans gave their judgment and they recognized "the Agreed Statements of ARCIC I ... as consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans" (From Resolution 8, Lambeth Conference 1988 in: G.R. Evans/J.R. Wright (ed), *The Anglican Tradition: A Handbook of Sources*, London (SPCK)-Minneapolis (Fortress) 1991, 577). The official reaction of the Vatican came in 1991 after a ten-year-consultation with those Bishops Conferences present in areas where the Anglican Church is present as well. Like the 1982 *Observations* it denies that the *Final Report* has reached the stage of *substantial* agreement: "the Catholic Church judges ... that it is not yet possible to state that substantial agreement has been reached on all the questions ..." ('ARCIC I: The Holy See's Response', *CI* 3/3 (1992) 126; cf. also 'Catholic Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I', *ISer* 82/1 (1993) 47-51). The statements do not "correspond fully to Catholic doctrine on the eucharist and on ordained ministry" (130). The question is how to interpret the difference between *consonant* and *full correspondence*. ARCIC II constituted a sub-committee to evaluate the Roman Catholic answer to ARCIC I. In 1994 it published a short text 'Clarifications of Certain Aspects of the Agreed Statements on Eucharist and Ministry of the First Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission', *ISer* 87/4 (1994) 237-242. These clarifications were welcomed by the PCPCU ("... no further study would seem to be required at this stage"), but questions were raised from the Anglican side whether justice was done to the diversity of Anglican positions. In particular the issue of ordination of women and questions about lay presidency at the eucharist in the Anglican Communion put some pressure on the agreements of ARCIC I.

258 'Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and the Archbishop of Canterbury: Canterbury 29 May 1982', *OiC* 18/3 (1982) 260-261; 'Common Declaration of Rome and Canterbury', *ET* 11/10 (1982) 163-164; 'Pope John Paul II and Ecumenism', *ISer* 49/2-3 (1982) 46-47; Witmer/Wright, *Called to Full Unity*, 300-302.

259 Venice (1983) (cf. 'Relations with the Anglican Communion', *ISer* 52/3 (1983) 82); Durham (1984) (cf. 'Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: Durham, August 22-31-1984', *ISer* 55/2-3 (1984) 68); Graymore (1985) (cf. 'ARCIC-II: August 26 - September 4, 1985', *ISer* 59/3-4 (1985) 40-41); and Llandaff (1986) (cf. 'Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II): August 26 - September 4, 1986', *ISer* 62/4 (1986) 202).

1987 and 1990 ecclesiology was the main theme in four sessions²⁶⁰, resulting in the report *The Church as Communion*²⁶¹ (1991). The third series of meetings²⁶² was, as one of the first bilateral dialogues, devoted to moral issues, published in *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*²⁶³ (1993). Afterwards ARCIC II began further work on Authority in the Church, the theme which got ample attention in ARCIC I, but on which a lesser level of agreement was claimed than on Eucharist and Ministry²⁶⁴. This resulted in the report *The Gift of Authority*²⁶⁵ (1999). And finally, the second phase was concluded by the publication of *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*²⁶⁶ in 2005, in which affirmations and questions concerning Mary that were already part of the 1981 document *Authority in the Church II* were addressed. In London 2007 a preparatory commission got together for a third phase of ARCIC.

The new Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, ARCIC II, was supposed to continue the work already begun. Three particular discussion points were mentioned: [1] "to examine (...) the outstanding doctrinal differences which still separate us ..." [2] "to study all that hinders the mutual recognition of the ministries of our Communities" and [3] "to recommend what practical steps will be necessary when (...) we are able to proceed to full communion"²⁶⁷. The first point of this threefold task led the commission to work on the issue of salvation and the church. Generally spoken, one could say that the issue of salvation, and in particular justification, was primarily an Anglican concern, whereas the Roman Catholics preferred to put the church on the agenda. From the Anglican side the Anglican Consultative Council had strongly urged ARCIC to take up the doctrine of justification as one of the divisive doctrinal differences

which at the time of the Reformation was a particular cause of contention. This request sprang out of a widespread view that the subject of justification and salvation is so central to the Christian faith that, unless there is assurance of agreement on this issue, there can be no full doctrinal agreement between our Churches²⁶⁸.

260 Rocca di Papa (1987) (cf. 'ARCIC II: September 1-10, 1987', *ISer* 64/2 (1987) 68-69); Edinburgh (1988) (cf. 'Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC-II): August 24 - September 2, 1988', *ISer* 68/3-4 (1988) 163); Venice (1989) (cf. 'ARCIC-II: August 28 - September 6, 1989', *ISer* 72/1 (1990) 1); and Dublin (1990) (cf. 'Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission ARCIC-II: August 28 - September 6, 1990', *ISer* 75/4 (1990) 168-169). In between, at the occasion of the visit of the archbishop of Canterbury to the pope, another *Common Declaration* was published in 1989 (cf. 'The Visit to Rome of the Archbishop of Canterbury: September 29 - October 2, 1989', *ISer* 71/3-4 (1989) 111-123; the same: 'Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II & Archbishop Runcie', *ET* 18/11 (1989) 161-163).

261 'The Church as Communion', *ISer* 77/2 (1991) 87-97; 'Church as Communion: An Agreed Statement by ARCIC-II' *OiC* 27/1 (1991) 77-97; 'Church as Communion', *Origins* 20/44 (1991) 719-727; 'Church as Communion' *CI* 2/7 (1991) 327-338.

262 Paris (1991) (cf. 'Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: August 27 - September 5, 1991', *ISer* 78/3-4 (1991) 205); St George's House, Windsor Castle (1992) (cf. 'Anglican-Catholic International Dialogue, Windsor Castle, England August 28 - September 6, 1992', *ISer* 83/2 (1993) 88); Venice (1993) (cf. 'Anglican-Roman Catholic International Dialogue: Venice, Italy, August 28-September 6, 1993', *ISer* 84/3-4 (1993) 154).

263 'Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church', Gross/Meyer/Rusch, *Growth in Agreement II*, 344-370.

264 Meetings that have been held thus far: Jerusalem (1994) (cf. 'ARCIC II: August 31 - September 9, 1994' *ISer* 87/4 (1994) 227); Venice (1995) (cf. 'Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, August 28 - September 6, 1995', *ISer* 89/2-3 (1995) 95).

265 Gross/Best/Fuchs, *Growth in Agreement III*, 60-81.

266 Gross/Best/Fuchs, *Growth in Agreement III*, 82-112

267 Common Declaration § 3. In May 1982 they met in Canterbury and declared that the end of the first series of talks called for "the next stage of our common pilgrimage of faith and hope towards unity for which we long" also § 3, in: 'Common Declaration of Pope John Paul II and the Archbishop of Canterbury: Canterbury 29 May 1982', *OiC* 18/3 (1982) 260-261. Also: 'Common Declaration Of Rome and Canterbury', *ET* 11/10 (1982) 163-164; 'Pope John Paul II and Ecumenism', *ISer* 49/2-3 (1982) 46-47; Witmer/Wright, *Called to Full Unity*, 300-302.

268 Preface of the co-chairmen in 'Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission ARCIC II', *ISer* 63/1 (1987) 33.

The theme was regarded as more fundamental than the themes of ARCIC I (eucharist, ministry and authority) because the problems they raised were seen as the result of the radical disagreement of the Western churches on salvation²⁶⁹. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Anglican position towards salvation and justification has been a different one, compared to the more univocal stand of e.g. the Lutheran communion²⁷⁰. The report itself already explicates that the position towards justification of the Anglican Church, at least from a historical point of view, has never been a monolithic position directly opposed to that of the Roman Catholic Church²⁷¹. From the diversity of streams within the Anglican church it was the more evangelical fraction that asked for a discussion on justification²⁷². From the Catholic side, and perhaps also from the Catholic side within the Anglican Communion, it was important, first, to broaden the perspective of justification as 'part' of salvation²⁷³ and, second, to include ecclesiology in the dialogue. In their view justification could not be separated from the understanding of the church, since both justification and the church are concerned with salvation. Therefore the 24 members of the commission²⁷⁴ decided in their first meeting in Venice (1983) to make the issues of church, grace and salvation and their relationship their immediate priority²⁷⁵. Three other meetings would follow in the years to come before the publication of the first statement. During the second meeting in Durham (1984)²⁷⁶ the commission made "substantial progress in the preparation of a statement on fundamental doctrinal principles concerning salvation, justification and the role of the Church in God's plan for the redemption of the whole human race"²⁷⁷. In Graymore (1985), at its third session, the commission moved forward to overcoming the old controversies and "substantial agreement" was in sight. At the Llandaff meeting (1986) the commission claimed "to have reached agreement on those issues of salvation and justification which gave rise to deep divisions (...) in the sixteenth century". The joint statement of the commission containing this agreement was called *Salvation and the Church*²⁷⁸ and was released in January 1987 for discussion and improvement. In November of the same year the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a set of Observations on *Salvation*

269 According to M.C. Boulding/T. Bradshaw, *Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission ARCIC II - With Commentary and Study Guide*, London (Catholic Truth Society-Church House Publishing) 1989, 1.

270 Cf. the difference between the titles of the ARCIC II document *Salvation and the Church* and the recent Lutheran document *Church and Justification*.

271 Cf. the cautious sentences "The doctrine of salvation has in the past been a cause of some contention between Anglicans and Roman Catholics" (§ 2) and "Anglican theologians reacted to the decree (on justification in Trent, RL) in a variety of ways, some sympathetic, others critical at least on particular points" (§ 2). The most 'radical' statement is that "in the course of time Anglican have widely come to understand that decree as a repudiation of their position" (§ 2).

272 "Yet, as has been widely recognised, the doctrine of justification by faith has always held a place of primary theological importance in a minority within the Anglican communion. Theologians of this 'Evangelical' minority had asked ARCIC for a statement on justification", G. Tavad, 'Justification in Dialogue', *OiC* 25 (1989) 305-306.

273 "Justification can be properly treated only within the wider context of the doctrine of salvation as a whole" Preface of the co-chairmen in 'Salvation and the Church', *ISer* 63/1 (1987) 33.

274 One quarter of the new commission continued from ARCIC I. The new members were chosen to represent both world communions in a more wide-ranging and balanced way, i.e. not only from the Anglo-Saxon countries.

275 'Relations with the Anglican Communion', *ISer* 52/3 (1983) 82. A preliminary meeting took place in Rome (1982), cf. 'Preparation for ARCIC-II, Nov. 9-10, 1982', *ISer* 50/4 (1982) 128-129.

276 'Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: Durham, August 22-31-1984', *ISer* 55/2-3 (1984) 68.

277 'Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: Durham, August 22-31-1984', *ISer* 55/2-3 (1984) 68.

278 'Salvation and the Church', *Origins* 16/34 (1986-87) 611-616; 'Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission ARCIC II', *ISer* 63/1 (1987) 33-41; 'idem', *OiC* 23/1-2 (1987) 157-172; 'idem', London (Catholic Truth Society-Church House Publishing) 1987. M.C. Boulding/T. Bradshaw, *Salvation and the Church: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission ARCIC II - With Commentary and Study Guide*, London (Catholic Truth Society-Church House Publishing) 1989.

and the Church, presenting a substantially positive judgement on the agreed statement, however not "being able to ratify the final affirmation according to which the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion 'are agreed on the essential aspects of the doctrine of salvation and on the church's role within it'"²⁷⁹.

Salvation and the Church consists of the following parts: The Status of the Document; Preface by the Co-Chairmen; Introduction (§ 1-8); Salvation and Faith (§ 9-11); Salvation and Justification (§ 12-18); Salvation and Good Works (§ 19-24); The Church and Salvation (§ 25-31); Conclusion (§ 32).

The introduction to the text starts with an expression of the common faith (§ 1). This is a kind of a trinitarian doxology which sets the tone for the rest of the document²⁸⁰. The trinitarian approach is taken up in the understanding of the church as *koinonia*²⁸¹, referring back to the Introduction of ARCIC I²⁸². A short historical review regarding the doctrine of salvation (§ 2) results in a delineation of the agreements and disagreements or difficulties (§ 3). In § 4-7 four main difficulties in the area of the doctrine of salvation are mentioned: its relationship to faith, justification, good works, and the church. In the last part of the introduction the negative developments in the past and the recent positive decisions are specified. In what follows the members of the commission want to "affirm that the four areas of difficulty (...) need not be matters of dispute between us" (§ 8).

The report does not want to present one interpretation of salvation as an all-encompassing concept. Although justification and sanctification play a particular role in the question between Roman Catholics and Protestants, the title of the report and the titles of the respective chapters (Salvation and Faith, Salvation and Justification etc.) demonstrate that the principal soteriological term is deliberately the broad and rather neutral term 'salvation'. The report wants to make clear that salvation entails more than the concept of justification. In the chapter on Salvation and Justification (§ 12-18) the first two paragraphs are devoted to the distinction between salvation and justification.

In baptism, the 'sacrament of faith' (cf. Augustine *Ep* 98.9), together with the whole Church, we confess Christ, enter into communion with him in his death and resurrection, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit are delivered from our sinfulness and raised to new life. The Scriptures speak of this salvation in many ways (§ 12).

Some of these 'many ways' are mentioned: Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the abiding presence and action of the Holy Spirit, our vision of God face to face and more (§ 12). The report maintains that there is no controlling concept to be found in the widely varied of 'salvation-language' in the New Testament: reconciliation and forgiveness, expiation and propitiation, redemption and liberation, adoption, regeneration and rebirth, and new creation/life, sanctification, justification. Justification is one way of speaking about salvation among other

279 'Observations on "Salvation and the Church"', *Origins* 18/27 (1988) 429-431. The main criticism concerns the language of the document, called symbolic and "therefore difficult to interpret... univocally" (431). So all observations ask for "more extended discussion", "further precision", better development and further elaboration, etc. (431). Ultimately the main problem is ecclesiology, "a rather vague conception of the church" (433) or "deficiencies concerning the role of the church in salvation" (434).

280 "The will of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is to reconcile to himself all that he has created and sustains, to set free the creation from its bondage to decay, and to draw all humanity into communion with himself" (§ 1).

281 "Through baptism we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, we are by the power of the Spirit made members of one body, and together we participate in the life of God" (§ 1).

282 "*Koinonia* with one another is entailed by our *koinonia* with God in Christ. This is the mystery of the Church (ARCIC I, Introduction § 5)".

ways, not "the exclusive notion in the light of which all other biblical ideas and images of salvation must be interpreted" (§ 18). It is, nevertheless, clear that despite the acknowledgement of this New Testament variety of concepts 'justification' and 'sanctification' are the most prominent ones in the report, because they played and play an important role in the theological question how divine grace relates to human response (§ 3). Justification and sanctification are not only two of the New Testament concepts for the understanding and communication of salvation, but here they also function as the two principle soteriological concepts that have returned time and again in the discussion on the relationship between God and humanity with regard to the appropriation of salvation. This problem of the relationship between God and humanity in the appropriation of salvation is the major issue in the report. It is regarded as the main difficulty from which the four themes under discussion - salvation and its relationship to faith, justification, good works, and the church - derive. The real issue at stake is not how both churches understand salvation in Christ, but "how divine grace relates to human response" (§ 3), how do human beings profit from the salvation made available in Christ? Is it through faith or through works that they are justified? And what is the role of the church in this?

Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics agree that God gives salvation *sola gratia*, and that grace evokes a response of faith. However, the question still is how God's grace and human response are related. In other words: where does God's grace stop in favour of the answer of the human being? Either is faith the result of God's grace and do works belong to the realm of human response? Or is faith already part of the human response, or are the good works part of God's grace? Is appropriation more an objective or more a subjective event? Where should one lay the accent? Is this a way of thinking that can be overcome?

The traditional problem between Roman Catholic and Protestant theology on the appropriation of salvation (i.e. justification) is attributed to a different understanding of the concept of justification. Although neither Roman Catholics nor Anglicans have considered justification and sanctification as distinct from or unrelated to one another, Reformation theology has always emphasized justification as an action of God alone, fearing a justification *because* of works. Catholic theology has included the elements of sanctification in its concept of justification, fearing a depreciation of the sanctification itself and human responsibility. This resulted on the one hand in the fear for too much human involvement in the appropriation, automatically seen as minimizing God's grace, and on the other in the fear of too much 'God-involvement', automatically seen as minimizing human's responsibility²⁸³. The first line of thought was

283 In the document it is stereotypically stated that Reformed theology emphasized the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to human beings, a declaration of righteousness to the unrighteous, fearing a too close causal relationship between good works and justification: we are accepted because of Christ, not because of ourselves. Roman Catholic theology considered this kind of justification as a nominal righteousness, an external event that did not have any effect on the sinner. It could not see how such a declaration of righteousness could involve a real appropriation. It was convinced that justification meant a "righteousness created in the inner being of the regenerate person by the indwelling of the Spirit" (§ 5). Thus the problem was not the use of the concept of justification but its interpretation. The document roughly pictures two lines of interpretation that caused the confusion: justify means (1) 'to pronounce righteous'; (2) 'to make righteous'. The first, Protestant line emphasizes God's action, the "absolute gratuitousness of salvation" (§ 14), justification as a declaration (imputed righteousness). The second, Catholic line considers justification much wider, embracing human responsibility and sanctification, justification as an effective renewal of the faithful (imparted righteousness). This includes elements of salvation which in the first line would belong to the field of sanctification. To overcome this problem the document states that justification and sanctification are two aspects of the same divine act. "God's grace effects what he declares: his creative word imparts what it imputes" (§ 15). Both justification and sanctification are God's work. A purely juridical interpretation of justification, a divine declaration of acquittal, is just one aspect of the biblical notion of salvation. We are not only accepted but we are continually renewed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (§ 16). Justification (through faith) does not mean only a declaration, but also a transformation (sanctifying recreation) of the justified person. Both are not a reward for

regarded as emphasizing faith as the way salvation is appropriated, the second line as emphasizing merits/good works.

The statement tries to overcome this dilemma by maintaining that the grace of God always comes first, while, at the same time, our humanity, human freedom is not excluded by God's initiative.

- Salvation is appropriated by faith (§ 9). Faith (*fides qua*) does not mean a presumptuous assurance (emphasis on God's grace) which neglects the holiness of life as emergence from justification, nor an insufficient human act of belief which needs human efforts (emphasis on human response) in order to bring about confidence in one's own salvation. Salvation through faith means that the human faith-response to the gift of salvation is both itself a gift of God's grace *and* a "truly human, personal response... Salvation is the gift of grace; it is by faith that it is appropriated" (§ 9). This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who "makes the fruits of Christ's sacrifice actual" (§ 9). The gift of salvation, appropriated by the given faith, excludes a presumptuous assurance. "God gives to the faithful all that is needed for their salvation" (§ 11). We cannot reward ourselves for something that is unconditionally given to us. At the same time faith, as the way by which the gift of salvation is appropriated, does not 'only' mean "an assent to the truth of the gospel" (§ 10) but it "involves commitment of our will to God in repentance and obedience" (§ 10) as well. Christian assurance cannot reduce responsibility, because the conviction of assurance is given as a consequence of God's gracious will for his people and makes the faith-response inseparable from love, good works and a life of holiness (§ 10). Therefore justification and sanctification are two aspects of the same divine act. "God's grace effects what he declares: his creative word imparts what it imputes" (§ 15).

- Faith and love are inseparable. "Good works necessarily spring from a living faith" (§ 19). What is the role of good works in the appropriation of salvation? Like faith good works depend totally on God's grace and at the same time they are human responses to the salvation God has given us in his Son: "we are created in Christ *for* good works" (§ 19). Through the Spirit we bear the fruit of our justification. In this sense good works can be seen as 'merits'. Augustine is quoted: "When God crowns our merits it is his own merits that he crowns" (§ 23). Justification is the work of God, an unmerited gift, and no human activity, be it faith or good works, can claim any right to salvation. However, those who have borne fruit for the Kingdom through the Spirit who actualizes God's salvation in Christ, "will be granted a place in that Kingdom when it comes at Christ's appearing" (§ 23). Again it is stated that "this reward is a gift depending wholly on divine grace" (§ 23). From the divine work follows the human work (§ 19).

Due to the trinitarian approach of the document, the realization of salvation is a christological event, however an event embedded in a strong relationship to the other persons of the Trinity. Christ's work, decisive for salvation of humankind, is always mentioned in the setting of a trinitarian event. This results in a rather passive role of Christ, compared to the role of the Father: the Father/God sent his Son" (§ 1.9.11.18.19) or: "the mercy and grace of God (are, RL) mediated and manifested through Jesus Christ" (§ 3). This is clear from the prepositions used with regard to Christ. He is not active for salvation, but it is God who has revealed (§ 1.10.11), realized (§ 9), fulfilled (§ 12), accepted, forgiven, reconciled (§ 18), refashioned, given (§ 19), disclosed (§ 20) etc. *in, through, because of* Christ. Christ is the agent of the Father who is the one who actually initiates and accomplishes the salvific will and purpose of the one trinitarian God. The third person of the Trinity is active in the appropriation of salvation. The Spirit communicates the achievement of Christ, his once-for-all atoning work²⁸⁴.

faith, but gifts of grace.

284 He is the 'Spirit of adoption' (§ 1) and unites the believers with Christ and with one another (§ 1). His

The relationship between salvation and the church is the theme of the final chapter of the document. It is, in my view, somewhat distinguished from the former themes. Although the report is called *Salvation and the Church* the main part is on the doctrine of salvation and a shorter section really deals with the relationship between church and salvation²⁸⁵. The connection between the two parts is situated in the question what role the church plays in the appropriation of salvation, its instrumentality. In short, whether the church is more on the side of God or more on the side of humanity in this process. The typical Protestant reproach was that the mediatorial role of the church endangered the unique and decisive place of Christ in the salvation process. On the other hand Catholics were convinced that Protestants did not do justice to the church with its ministry and sacraments as the real means of grace granted by God (§ 7). This subject-object dichotomy (the church seen as solely active or passive in the appropriation salvation) is overcome in a similar way as happened in the other themes. Like faith and good works, the church is not church by itself (as a merit) but because of God's graceful initiative. Therefore the church, first of all, is a sign and foretaste of the gospel "for its vocation is to embody and reveal the redemptive power contained within the Gospel" (§ 26). Secondly, the church is a steward in the proclamation of this gospel of which she is a sign (§ 27). And third, the church, as sign and steward is also an instrument for the "realisation of God's eternal design, the salvation of humanity... In its ministry to the world the Church seeks to share with all people the grace by which its own life is created and sustained" (§ 28). These three concepts for the understanding of the church are summarized in the expression of the church "as sacrament of God's saving work" (§ 29). So, when the church acts, i.e. plays a role in the appropriation of salvation, then this is not an action by itself but in/through the Holy Spirit. Here pneumatology plays an important role, because the church is only sign/foretaste, steward and instrument for the salvation of humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit²⁸⁶.

Now that we have dealt with the major issue of the report, the way in which salvation is appropriated and some questions about the meaning of salvation are left.

Since salvation is realized in/through Jesus Christ the first question is: what are the

indwelling (§ 5.9.16) makes us members of the one body, makes us participants in the life of God. He prepares a people for God (§ 9). In fact, the Holy Spirit communicates through "the abiding presence and action (...) in the Church, (...) his present gifts of grace" (§ 12.27). Through justification we are enabled to produce works which are the fruit of the Spirit (§ 17).

285 Cf. § 32 which evaluates the result of the report in two areas, namely "the essential aspects of the doctrine of salvation and on the Church's role within it". The distinction is, in our opinion, to a certain extent the result of the fact that the subjects under discussion (resp. justification and the church) are introduced by groups with different interests and were brought together in one report. The introduction of the fourth field of difficulties in § 7 is an indication of the distinguished position of this part: "Although the sixteenth-century disagreements centred mainly on the relationship of faith, righteousness and good works to the salvation of the individual, *the role of the Church* in the process of salvation constituted a *fourth* difficulty". Therefore we do not agree with Valentini who states that "if the theological reflection behind the document is soteriological in inspiration, its texture and its parts seem to aim rather at outlining the mystery and role of the Church in God's plan of salvation" (D. Valentini, 'A Contribution to the Reading of the ARCIC II Statement on "Salvation and the Church"' *ISer* 63/1 (1987) 42). Precisely because the role of the church in the process of salvation was regarded to a certain extent as problematic by the Reformation theologians, the role of the church in the salvation process was seen as less important than the role of the individual. These two attitudes are reflected in the report.

286 With regard to the church as sign it is said that "what Christ achieved through his cross and resurrection is communicated by the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church" (§ 26). With regard to her stewardship for the proclamation of the gospel one states that "its power to affect the hearer comes not from our unaided efforts but entirely from the Holy Spirit, who is the source of the Church's life and who enables it to be truly the steward of God's design" (§ 27). With regard to the church's instrumentality the report holds that "while we recognise that the Holy Spirit acts outside the community of Christians, nevertheless it is within the Church, where the Holy Spirit gives and nurtures the new life of the Kingdom, that the Gospel becomes a manifest reality" (§ 28).

christological events that brought about salvation? The report does not give deliberate attention to this question, simply because it is not regarded as important to the discussion on the understanding of salvation and so the different perspectives in the report cannot lead to firm conclusions. First of all the salvific effect (necessity) of the incarnation is mentioned. The Father sent the Son into the world. Christ as the image of God "took flesh so that we in turn might share the divine nature and so reflect the glory of God" (§ 1). This perspective plays, however, a minor role in the document, because, secondly, the salvific effect of the incarnation is always concentrated in the events at the end of Christ's life. So for example, immediately after the above quoted sentence from § 1 it is stated that the mystery of God's love is revealed "through Christ's life, death and resurrection" (§ 1). This is confirmed by the terminology frequently used to refer to the realization of salvation. The majority of the expressions use 'death' and 'resurrection' as the ultimate events realizing salvation: 'death' and 'resurrection' (§ 1.12.16); 'cross and resurrection' (§ 26); 'once for all death' and 'resurrection' (§ 9); 'sacrifice on the cross' (§ 12); 'once-for-all atoning work of Christ' (§ 27). Sometimes these expressions are preceded by a reference to Christ's life, like 'life, death and resurrection' (§ 1.18); 'ministry, atoning death and rising again' (§ 3); and 'Christ's life and self-oblation on the cross' (§ 18). Nevertheless, in general the pattern used does not show much interest in the salvific aspects of the life of Christ. The life of Christ is either not mentioned or it is part of a series, but it seems not to have a specific salvific meaning. The same pertains to the resurrection in a certain sense. Although it is mentioned time and again, it is not considered to be as important as the death of Christ. The Scriptures "tell of God's eternal will fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, his decisive act in overcoming the power of evil and reconciling sinners who believe" (§ 12). And: "the Holy Spirit makes the fruits of Christ's sacrifice actual" (§ 9). Although Christ's death is not at all considered as an isolated event, it is clear that it is seen as the most important and decisive event for the salvation of humankind.

Why and from what humanity has to be saved is not a particular theme in the report either, although salvation implies a situation of non-salvation. "The concept of salvation has the all-embracing meaning of the deliverance of human beings from evil..." (§ 13). There are different views on what evil means in the report. Two positions can be discerned. First, what we would call a subjective idea of evil. Human beings have to be delivered because they are sinners themselves, they are personally involved and their work can be "flawed by human weakness and self-centredness" (§ 21)²⁸⁷. Second, the report also shows a more objective position on evil which tends to stress the fact that we need salvation because of the power of evil and death, e.g. when it says that salvation is necessary "to set free the creation from its bondage to decay" (§ 1), that human beings suffer from "an alienated and lost humanity" (§ 18), or that "Christ sets us free from the demonic forces manifested not only in individual but also in social egotism" (§ 20). Here the human being does not commit sin, but suffers from a bondage from which (s)he must be liberated. Of course, the report does not want to divide between these two aspects of evil, the subjective and the objective, and they go together in one and the same sentence²⁸⁸. Only in the section on Church and Salvation we see a more elaborate and concrete view on the question why we need salvation. Since God's purpose of complete salvation has not yet been achieved, we live in "a world full of suffering and injustice, division and strife".

As we have showed before, justification and sanctification are two soteriological concepts that

287 The need for salvation is mainly caused by sin of human beings (§ 1); it is our sinfulness that needs justification (§ 5); our sins have to be forgiven (§ 9); "however grave our sins may be" (§ 11), delivering of our sinfulness (§ 12).

288 Cf. "... Christ's sacrifice on the cross, his decisive act in overcoming the power of evil and reconciling sinners who believe" (§ 12).

dominate the report, mainly because they traditionally dominated the question on the appropriation of salvation. Throughout the report salvation is used in a more general sense. For the understanding of salvation, however, the report uses a variety of soteriological concepts and so puts the wide variety of the New Testament references into practice²⁸⁹. God, in particular the Father, has a will, a purpose, an eternal design, which is the salvation of humanity. The individual Christian and the church play a role in this purpose and depend on it. Because this salvific purpose of God is one process which takes place in history, the understanding of salvation is characterized by the terminology of the 'yet' and the 'not yet'. Both the individual and the church are under the 'yet' and 'not yet' of God's salvation²⁹⁰. Although it is certainly not the intention of the report to make a sharp distinction between the present and future aspects of salvation, it is, nevertheless, clear that it is predominantly interested in its contemporary aspects. With regard to the 'not yet' of salvation the report refers to future salvation of humanity in terms of the "final resurrection" (§ 12) "final consummation" (§ 16), "final harvest" (§ 30), the return of Christ (§ 1.16.17), "God's promise of eternal life" (§ 10)²⁹¹ and the Kingdom²⁹². The 'yet' of salvation for the individual and the church²⁹³ can be summarized by the concepts of

- (1) justification and its juridical terminology (§ 18), like the deliverance from sins (§ 12); the removal of our condemnation and our new standing (§ 15); our acceptance (§ 16.18); remission of sins (§ 18); forgiveness and reconciliation (§ 18.30). This way of understanding salvation corresponds to what we called before the understanding of evil in a subjective way: namely as sin actively committed by humanity itself;
- (2) sanctification and its 'physical' terminology, like healing (§ 1); recreation (§ 1); new creation (§ 9.19); new life (§ 12); renewal (§ 16); present renewal and rebirth to newness of life (§ 18); renewed humanity/new humanity (§ 19); transformation (§ 12.19); growing into conformity with Christ (§ 17); restoring into God's likeness (§ 19)
- (3) liberation, like freedom (§ 19.20); liberty, liberation (§ 20.30); freedom from sin (§ 21); freedom (§ 23). The understanding of salvation as freedom corresponds to the other way in which evil is perceived, namely in an objective way as power from which humanity is saved²⁹⁴. However freedom is not only used as freedom from a particular kind of evil (freedom from), but also as freedom to live according to God's will;
- (4) unity and its relational terminology, like communion (§ 1.12.29); *koinonia* (§ 1); community (§ 25.30) incorporation (§ 16) sharing (§ 29); fellowship (§ 30); participation (§ 12). It is the intention of the report to keep these concepts together as different accents of the one process of salvation initiated by God. The nature of salvation is not completely covered by the indicative of the pardoning of sins and the human acceptance in thanksgiving. The indicative implies the imperative which means that "we are freed and enabled to keep the commandments of God by the power of the Holy Spirit" (§ 19)²⁹⁵.

289 "In order to describe salvation in all its fullness, the New Testament employs a wide variety of language. Some terms are of more importance than others: but there is no controlling term or concept; they complement one another" (§ 13).

290 With regard to the good works (as result of our salvation) of the individual it is said that "those who responded to the grace of God and consequently borne fruit for the Kingdom will be granted a place in that Kingdom when it comes at Christ's appearing" (§ 23).

291 The present aspects belonging to the idea of eternal life in e.g. the gospel of John, are not present in the report.

292 "... the Kingdom when it comes at Christ's appearing" (§ 23); "... the Kingdom in a world still awaiting its consummation" and "... until the Kingdom is realised in its fullness (§ 30). See also § 26.28.30.31).

293 The report does not specifically speak about salvation outside the church/believer, however recognises that "the Holy Spirit acts outside the communion of Christians..." (§ 28).

294 Cf. e.g. "Life in Christ sets us free from the demonic forces..." (§ 20).

295 Ethical demands "are not a price to pay in order to *have* (merit) *salvation* but on the contrary an attitude to adopt in order to *live within the logic* of salvation", J.M.R. Tillard, 'Church and Salvation: on the Sacramentality of the Church', *OiC* 20/4 (1984) 292, from a paper written in preparation of the ARCIC II dialogue.

What justification, sanctification, liberation and unity actually mean is, similar to the meaning of evil, only made concrete in the section of the dialogue on Church and Salvation. The church as a fellowship of justified, sanctified and liberated people is called, empowered, and sent to "participate in Christ's mission to the world through the proclamation of the Gospel of salvation by its words and deeds" (§ 31). This means to affirm e.g. the sacredness and dignity of the person, the value of natural and political communities, to witness against the structures of sin in society; and to be an agent of justice and compassion (§ 31). Although this is a provisional task of the church it is nevertheless part of the one process of salvation which God accomplishes throughout history.

Conclusions

- (1) The approach of the document is trinitarian. Salvation, the heart of the message of the good news, is realized by way of a christologic event that is embedded in a strong relationship to the other persons of the Trinity. The work of Christ in view of creation and humanity is always mentioned in the setting of a trinitarian event. This leads to a rather passive role of Christ: "the mercy and grace of God (are, RL) mediated and manifested through Jesus Christ" (§ 3). Christ is the agent of the Father, the image of the invisible God, who is the one who actually initiates and accomplishes the salvific will and purpose of the one trinitarian God.
- (2) In what sense Christ is the pivotal person through which salvation is offered is not elaborated. In general, it is through Christ's life, death and resurrection that God's love is revealed, although his life is omitted occasionally.
- (3) The heart of the discussion between Anglicans and Roman Catholics is to be found in the question of the appropriation of salvation, the relation between God and the human being in the process of salvation. The third person of the Trinity is active in the appropriation of salvation. The Spirit communicates the achievement of Christ, his once-for-all atoning work. The dialogue has resulted in an agreement on the essential aspects of the doctrine of salvation and on the role of the church in it, which means that it is not "an area where any remaining differences of theological interpretation or ecclesiological emphasis, either within or between our Communion, can justify our continuing separation" (§ 32). The different view on the relation between God and the human being, as the centre of the original disagreement, cannot be a church dividing issue any more. The 'solution' is based on the understanding of salvation as a dynamic process in which God and humanity are involved, although not in an equal way. God's initiative in this process of salvation is beyond doubt for both Roman Catholics and Anglicans. Not only the acquittal of the sinners but also their re-creation for good works are the result of the gift of grace. There is no room for the understanding of salvation as merit in the sense of a human achievement that put God in his/her debt. With regard to the nature of salvation this does not mean that human freedom and responsibility are excluded from this salvific process. Salvation as a dynamic process in history involves also the assent of the human being both in the truly human, personal response in faith and in the commitment of our will to God in repentance and obedience to his call.
- (4) Traditionally the concepts of justification and sanctification play an important role in this discussion and so they do in this report. The report intends to return to an understanding of justification as one of the many salvific concepts among others. In this

way justification is limited to its soteriological content, instead of being a theological aegis under which the relation God-human being is dealt with and which could become a ruling concept. Whereas the soteriological content of justification is considered to be important²⁹⁶ it is stated that - according to the New Testament - salvation entails more than being justified, so that justification cannot be regarded as an exclusive concept for a comprehensive understanding of Christian salvation. So we see a kind of relativization of the doctrine of justification as a part, albeit an important part, of the doctrine of salvation and the report turns away from the understanding of justification as a meta-dogmatic or meta-theological principle that underlies all doctrines, a criterion that judges all other doctrines, including the doctrine of the church. Hence in the section on the relationship between church and salvation there is no explicit reference to a possible criteriological function of justification. The understanding of salvation in terms of a variety of concepts which we gathered into four groups is the result of ARCIC II's broader understanding of salvation which cannot be limited to one or another concept. This broadening of the salvific perspective is not the result of a relativism which makes it easier to find common ground but is based on the variety of concepts in the New Testament. The question why the New Testament uses such a variety is not posed. The report's basic principle to broaden the conceptual understanding of salvation is reflected in the use of the concepts of freedom and communion to mention the most prominent ones. It remains, however, unclear why precisely these concepts fit so well in the view of the participants. The report does not make clear why freedom and communion are relevant and not, e.g. concepts in the field of cultic or pedagogical language. The approach seems to reduce the attention to anthropological or cosmological questions that are part of the soteriological quest. The fact that the understanding of evil, as the counterpart of salvation, is not elaborated either, shows a lack of interest in a synchronic approach to the understanding of salvation and so does the passive interpretation of Christ in the process of salvation. The fact that the question of the salvation "of those who have no explicit faith in Christ"²⁹⁷ is deliberately not discussed because "this has not been a matter of historical dispute between us"²⁹⁸ demonstrates that the primary interest is diachronic. The proposal to address the issue of salvation is primarily motivated by the historically grown differences, which have indeed their present effects. As a consequence there is hardly any reference to the question as to what we mean by salvation today. The understanding of salvation as a process in history leads to the perception that salvation has past, present and future aspects (§ 12). The report mainly focuses on the present aspects of salvation due to the fact that the disagreements on the appropriation of salvation pertain to the current relationship between God and the human being and the role of the church in this relationship. The concern for these present aspects does not mean that the report pays substantial attention to the question what salvation actually means. The fact that justification and sanctification play such a large role in the report is not the result of the conviction of Roman Catholics and Anglicans that both concepts are the most appropriate ones for our contemporary understanding of salvation. It is therefore somewhat overstated when the report concludes that "we have realized the central meaning and profound significance which the message of justification and sanctification, within the whole doctrine of salvation, continues to have for us today" (§ 32). Precisely this meaning and significance "for us today" is subordinate to the attempts to solve the problems of appropriation that belong

296 "... expressing an important facet of the truth" (§ 18).

297 *Salvation and the Church*, Preface by the Co-Chairmen.

298 *Salvation and the Church*, Preface by the Co-Chairmen.

to the common heritage of both communions²⁹⁹. This is confirmed by the fact that the report has no clear idea from what we are saved. Deliverance from evil is the common term, but both a more subjective and objective approach play a role. The attention to historical problems dominates the report to the extent that the attention to the challenge "to bear true witness" is secondary. In this sense the ARCIC II dialogue *Salvation and the Church* is characterized by a diachronic approach.

299 "... our first concern has been to state our common faith on the issues in the doctrine of salvation which have proved problematic in the past...", *Salvation and the Church*, Preface by the Co-Chairmen.

Chapter 4

The Reformed-Roman Catholic International Dialogue 1990: *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*

The second phase of the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue, sponsored by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church (PCPCU), began in 1984 in Rome. Its predecessor started in 1970 and lasted until 1977.

The Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue has its origins in the last years of the 1960s, when the WARC put aside its hesitations regarding bilateral dialogues for various reasons³⁰⁰. The Roman Catholic Church, according to Vatican II, was ready to engage in an ecumenical series of dialogue, but the WARC welcomed this kind of ecumenical exchange only after other confessional families had shown their willingness³⁰¹. At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the WARC in Romania in June 1968, it was

300 These hesitations entailed both methodical and theological reasons. The latter were specifically related to a possible dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. According to A. Blancy, "doctrinal divergence on the nature, place and role of the church in relation to God and to the world had been a cause of Reformed hesitation to enter into dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, which appeared to have a different set of priorities", (A. Blancy, 'Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue', *DEM*, 853). With regard to the ecumenical methods the Reformed hesitations were directed against bilateral dialogues in general. "The World Alliance of Reformed Churches had repeatedly affirmed that it consciously desisted from mounting an international dialogue with Roman Catholics in order to strengthen the potential dialogue between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church", Ehrenström/Gassmann, *Confessions in Dialogue*, 50. Cf. also 'The Presence of Christ in Church and World: Final Report of the Dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1977' in: Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 433-463; and 'Joint Report of Consultations between the representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church, held at Geneva, Nov. 27-29, 1968 and at Vogelenzang (Holland), April 15-19, 1969', *ISer* 8/3 (1969) 18.

301 L. Vischer/A. Karrer (ed), *Reformed and Roman Catholic in Dialogue*, Studies from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches 10, Geneva (WARC) 1988, 6. There were several reasons for engaging in an international dialogue. First, practical reasons: the (theological, geographical) limitations of already existing national/regional dialogues; the danger of duplication in dialogues; the absence of dialogues in certain countries because of specific problems; a better communication and participation of achieved results on a national / regional level; and the worldwide implications of some of the issues under discussion. Second, a more historical reason was that "both traditions feel a specific responsibility towards each other" ('Joint Report of Consultations between the representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church, held at Geneva, Nov. 27-29, 1968 and at Vogelenzang (Holland), April 15-19, 1969', *ISer* 8/3 (1969) 18), next to their responsibility towards the whole Christian family. Third, bilateral conversations would enrich both communions. Noteworthy is that a clear aim of the dialogue is not mentioned in the report. Whereas others declare that the ultimate goal of a dialogue is (re)union (e.g. ARCIC clearly formulated that its goal was 'organic unity of the two churches') or 'only' mutual understanding, taking away prejudices etc. (e.g. Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue), the final document does not explicitly speak of clear aims and goals. Cautiously it is said that the first step in the conversations would be a "listening carefully to one another" (§ 9). "It was not the purpose (...) to work toward specific recommendations", but "the task was to locate the present convergences, continuing tensions, and open questions", "more descriptive than prescriptive" (§ 9), be it that all the discussions were supposed to stand in the "broader perspective of how these (discussions, RL) would advance their common concern to manifest the relevance of Christ in the world today" (§ 4). The first press release summarizes: "The purpose of this series of meetings is to explore the elements in the modern situation which might set in a new light the peculiar tensions between the two traditions, to co-ordinate discussions already in progress at the local and national level and to stimulate fresh discussions of this kind, and above all to share a common concern to make manifest the relevance of Christ in the world of today",

arranged to "explore the elements in the new situation that... make the initiation of Reformed/Roman Catholic dialogue wise at this time"³⁰². Two exploratory meetings followed³⁰³. Their purpose was to find out whether a dialogue "could be justified between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Reformed Alliance"³⁰⁴. A 'Joint Report'³⁰⁵ gave a positive reaction to that question and expressed "the desirability and feasibility of official Reformed-Roman Catholic conversations on a world level"³⁰⁶. It was proposed to choose the themes of ecclesiology, Christology, and the position of the Christian in the world, those three combined under the heading: 'The Presence of Christ in Church and World'.

In 1969 the Executive Committee of the WARC and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) agreed to engage in a dialogue. In 1970 the dialogue started. Seven years later, in Rome, 1977 the final report, *The Presence of Christ in Church and World*³⁰⁷, was discussed and agreed upon.

During the period in between the two dialogue phases (1977-1984) the results of the first phase were evaluated and plans for future dialogue were made. Accordingly, the report was sent for responses to the member churches of the WARC and to 20 Episcopal Conferences of the Roman Catholic Church. At its centennial Consultation in St. Andrews, Scotland 1977, the Executive Committee of the WARC recognized "that the release of these dialogue reports now does not mark an end but rather a beginning. The elements of consensus and dissensus in these reports (*Presence of Christ in Church and World* and *The theology of Marriage and the Problems of Mixed Marriages*, sponsored by the WARC, LWF, and the SPCU, RL) must be tested by the thinking of the Reformed family as a whole"³⁰⁸. By means of a short series of two intermediate meetings, the responses to the Final Report were evaluated (Rome 1980³⁰⁹) and plans were developed how to proceed in a succeeding phase. It was decided to continue the dialogue with a comprehensive and fundamental study "in which the issues arising from the earlier

('International Dialogue', *ISer* 11/3 (1970) 19). The dialogue had a exploratory and surveying, more than a decision oriented or introductive character.

302 'Joint Working Groups', *ISer* 7/2 (1969) 8.

303 The first in Geneva 1968 ('Joint Working Groups', *ISer* 7/2 (1969) 8-9) and the second in Vogelenzang (The Netherlands) 1969 ('Joint Report of Consultations between the representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church, held at Geneva, Nov. 27-29, 1968 and at Vogelenzang (Holland), April 15-19, 1969', *ISer* 8/3 (1969) 18-20).

304 'Joint Working Groups', *ISer* 7/2 (1969) 8.

305 'Joint Report of Consultations between the representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church, held at Geneva, Nov. 27-29, 1968 and at Vogelenzang (Holland), April 15-19, 1969', *ISer* 8/3 (1969) 18-20; including a list of subjects and an outline for the dialogue to come; the same in: M. Pradervand/F. Kaan (ed), *Nairobi 1970: Proceedings of the Uniting General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) Held at Nairobi, Kenya August 20-3-, 1970*, Geneva (WARC) 1970, 204-210.

306 'Joint Report of Consultations between the representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church...', *ISer* 8/3 (1969) 18.

307 'The Presence of Christ in Church and World: Final Report of the Dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1977' in: Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 433-463; 'The Presence of Christ in Church and World: Final Report of the Dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1970-1977', *ISer* 35/3-4 (1977) 18-34 (including the Covering Letter of the two co-chairmen of the Joint Study Commission, Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B. and David Willis); 'idem', *OiC* 14/4 (1978) 340-375; *The Presence of Christ in Church and World: Final Report of the Dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1970-1977*, WARC-Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Geneva-The Vatican 1977. Excerpts of the dialogue in: 'The Presence of Christ in Church and World: WARC - Roman Catholic Dialogue', *RW* 35/1-4 (1978) 16-23, 71-75, 106-113, 152-158; and in: *Origins* 7/31 (1978) 495-496 (only covering the eucharist, apostolic succession and infallibility).

308 'What happened at the meeting of the Executive Committee?', *RW* 34/7-8 (1977) 368.

309 Cf. 'Report of the Evaluation Group on the Roman Catholic/Reformed Dialogue, The Presence of Christ in Church and World', *ISer* 45/1 (1981) 46-48; the same in 'The Presence of Christ in Church and World: Evaluation Session of the Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue', *RW* 36/5 (1981) 221-226; cf. P.J. Achtemeier, 'Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue', *RW* 36/5 (1981) 212-220. It is interesting that on the Reformed side the 1977 document 'The Presence of Christ' was met with such interest that it was necessary to make some reprints, whereas by the end of 1978 only two responses from the Roman Catholic side had been received, later on increased to five.

dialogue and the responses to it would be taken into account"³¹⁰. In Geneva 1981³¹¹ the procedure for the discussion phase to come was elaborated in a working session between representatives of the WARC and the SPCU. One of the basic principles of the theological task was "above all to deal specifically with the contemporary expressions of faith and life"³¹². A guiding thread was worked out under the title of the theme: 'Towards the Unity of the Church in the Contemporary World'. From the beginning it was declared that fundamental ecclesiological differences should be part of the dialogue.

The newly appointed International Roman Catholic/Reformed Commission, including (a few) female and members from the Third World³¹³, came together for its first session in Rome 1984³¹⁴. Here, the encompassing theme 'The Church: The People of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Spirit' was discussed and concerns were expressed. "The main purpose of the session was to specify objectives to be pursued within the field of ecclesiology, and to plan work preparatory to the next meeting"³¹⁵. In Kappel-am-Albis (Switzerland) 1985³¹⁶ the ecclesiological theme was pursued. The third session took place in Venice in 1986³¹⁷. Attention was given to Christ's sole mediationship and its bearing upon ecclesiology. In Cartigny (Switzerland) 1987³¹⁸ "work continued towards the production of a report on the theme (...) 'The Church: The People of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit'"³¹⁹. During its fifth and last session in Ariccia (Italy) 1988³²⁰, "the joint commission worked towards the completion of a final statement describing the results of its five years work"³²¹. Two joint sub-committee meetings in Geneva in 1989 and 1990 were necessary to take into account suggestions of the commission for the report and to prepare it for publication, which eventually took place in 1990 under the title *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*³²².

310 'Report of the Evaluation Group on the Roman Catholic/Reformed Dialogue, The Presence of Christ in Church and World', *ISer* 45/1 (1981) 48; also quoted in: A. Klein, 'The Dialogue between Roman Catholics and Reformed', *OiC* 18/3 (1982) 244.

311 In 1980 the executive committee of the WARC welcomed the evaluation report and decided to set up a preparation group for preparing the second phase; cf. 'World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC); Executive Committee Meeting, Princeton, NJ, USA, July 27 to August 2, 1980', *ISer* 44/3-4 (1980) 115.

312 Klein, 'The Dialogue between Roman Catholics and Reformed', 244.

313 The absence of women members and representatives from Africa, Latin America, and Asia was mentioned in the criticisms on the procedure of the first phase; cf. 'Report of the Evaluation Group on the Roman Catholic/Reformed Dialogue, The Presence of Christ in Church and World' *ISer* 45/1 (1981) 46-48; the same in 'The Presence of Christ in Church and World: Evaluation Session of the Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue', *RW* 36/5 (1981) 221-226. Lewis S. Mudge and Bernard Sesboué, co-chairman of the second phase, speak of delegations that are reasonably, yet not entirely, representative, but they are, nevertheless, still aware of the "absence of women and of persons from Latin America, as well as members of still other groups whose voices need to be heard" (though without defining who they have in mind); L.S. Mudge/B. Sesboué (ed), *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church: Reformed/Roman Catholic International Dialogue*, Studies from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches 21, Geneva (WARC) 1991, ii. The total number of participants was, according to the final report, about 27 persons, including members, consultants, staff and observers, but the exact number varied per session.

314 Cf. 'Reformed/Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission - Phase II, Rome, January 2-6, 1984', *ISer* 54/1 (1984) 19-20; the same in 'Roman Catholic - Reformed Dialogue', *RW* 38/1 (1985) 38.

315 'Reformed/Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission - Phase II, Rome, January 2-6, 1984', *ISer* 54/1 (1984) 20.

316 'Reformed/Roman Catholic Dialogue', *RW* 38/5 (1985) 301-302; cf. also one of the papers of the session on the universality and particularity of the church, which was published in *RW*: Alan E. Lewis, 'Catholicity, Confessionalism and Convergence', *RW* 38/8 (1985) 422-433.

317 'Catholic-Reformed International Dialogue Commission : Phase II, Venice, Italy, January 3-8, 1986', *ISer* 60/1-2 (1986) 33; the same in 'Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue', *RW* 39/1 (1986) 500.

318 'Roman Catholic/Reformed International Dialogue, January 3-8, 1987', *ISer* 63/1 (1987) 12-13.

319 'Roman Catholic/Reformed International Dialogue, January 3-8, 1987', *ISer* 63/1 (1987), 13.

320 'Reformed-Roman Catholic International Dialogue', January 2-9, 1988', *ISer* 67/2 (1988) 90; practically the same in 'Reformed-Roman Catholic Commission, Phase II', *RW* 40/1 (1988) 895-896.

321 'Reformed-Roman Catholic International Dialogue', January 2-9, 1988', *ISer* 67/2 (1988) 90; also in 'Reformed-Roman Catholic Commission, Phase II', *RW* 40/1 (1988) 895-896.

322 Reformed/Roman Catholic International Dialogue, 'Towards a Common Understanding of the Church: Reformed/Roman Catholic International Dialogue Second Phase (1984-1990)', *ISer* 74/3 (1990) 91-118. Cf. also Mudge/Sesboué, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, 1991; 'Toward a Common Understanding of the Church: Report on Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue 1984-1990', *CI* 2/16 (1991) 775-794. Cf. also the volume *Kerk tussen erfenis en opdracht: Protestanten en katholieken op weg naar een gemeenschappelijk kerkbegrip*, edited by H.P.J. Witte (IIMO Research Publication 39, Utrecht/Leiden 1994) in

The central theme of the second phase was ecclesiology³²³. According to co-chairmen Mudge and Sesboüé in 1991 it was "the third international bilateral dialogue to focus principally on the doctrine of the Church"³²⁴, next to the Orthodox-Roman Catholic and the Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogues. This 'principle' attitude towards the church has resulted in a much more coherent and profound document than its predecessor. It consists of four chapters that focus on different perspectives regarding ecclesiology. The heart of the report are the two chapters in the middle, preceded (after the Introduction (§ 1-11)) by a historically oriented chapter and followed by a chapter which looks into the future. Chapter one encompasses the largest part of the whole document, called 'Towards a Reconciliation of Memories' (§ 12-63). It describes the separate and mutual history of the two communions from both a Reformed and a Roman Catholic perspective; perspectives that were formulated only after a mutual consultation of opinions and convictions with the other party. Mudge and Sesboüé write in their Foreword that "we were not yet able to write a single history of our relationships and differences. But we have come close"³²⁵. This has resulted in a "certain reassessment of the past" (§ 16) in view of a reconciliation of memories "in which we will begin to share one sense of the past rather than two" (§ 16). Chapter two, 'Our Common Confession of Faith,' contains 24 sections (§ 64-88) in which Reformed and Roman Catholics state what they can confess together today, despite differences that may still remain. This rather large measure of agreement, "perhaps the heart of the document"³²⁶, is not merely given as a state of affairs on christology, soteriology and ecclesiology at a certain point in history - which is actually not to be underestimated - but also to be seen as a "positive framework"³²⁷ to the third chapter, 'The Church we Confess and our Divisions in History' (§ 89-144). In this second large section of the document the doctrine of the church itself is under discussion, in particular the differences and divergences³²⁸ in the

which Dutch Roman Catholic and Reformed theologians comment on *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*. The changes of the title throughout the second phase say something about the developments in the programme of the dialogue. Initially, before the second phase actually has begun, its theme was called: 'Towards the Unity of the Church in the Contemporary World' ('Plenary Meeting of the Secretariat, November 1981', *ISer* 47/3-4 (1981) 126 (112-141). In the report of the 1982 Ottawa General Council of the WARC the theme is called 'Towards the Unity of the Church in the World of Today', cf. R. Smith, 'Theological Perspectives: Report of the Secretary of the Department of Theology', *RW* 37/1 (1982) 71 [63-99]). This working title disappears when the meetings start in 1984. All the press releases of the five meetings speak instead about the theme called 'The Church: The People of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Spirit'. This trinitarian outlook vanishes again in the title of the final report, which shows, at first sight, more interest in doctrinal comprehension than in an eagerness for unity, more interest in the internal problems than in a common position in the world of today. Both the allusion to the 'Unity of the Church' and the '(Contemporary) World', which coloured the second phase at its start, have disappeared in the title of the final text that concludes the second phase. The question is whether these mutations have their ground in a change of outlook during the dialogue. At least one could say that the present title gives a better indication of the purpose mentioned in the document than the previous ones when it is stated that "we have carried on a dialogue whose purpose has been to deepen mutual understanding and to foster the eventual reconciliation of our two communities" (§ 1). 'Understanding' seems to be the key-word, and 'unity' and 'contemporary world' have been replaced by the less challenging task of an 'eventual reconciliation', notwithstanding the expressed conviction that common witness is important because the "Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches must make every effort to speak jointly to the men and women of today to whom God desires to communicate Christ's message of salvation" (§ 157).

323 "We have now gone deeper into the realm of ecclesiology (...) to clarify the common grounds between our communions as well as to identify our remaining differences. We hope these results will encourage further steps toward common testimony and joint ecumenical action", § 3.

324 Mudge/Sesboüé, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, i.

325 Mudge/Sesboüé, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, i. Cf. also § 7, saying "we are moving closer to being able to write our histories together".

326 Mudge/Sesboüé, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, i.

327 'Relations with the Churches of the West', *ISer* 67/2 (1988) 80; also called a "positive context", *Towards a Common Understanding*, § 88.

328 These two estimations refer to a distinction between "a legitimate pluralism in the Church" (differences) and

understanding of church as divine institution, and as human historical, institutional response to what God has done. "Difficulties reside largely in different understandings of the relationship between what is *confessed* concerning the church and the concrete forms of its historical existence"³²⁹. The fourth and final chapter, 'The Way Forward' (§ 145-165), points to ways that might be taken in deepening existing fellowship, reconciling memories, common witnessing and considering the kind of unity we seek.

For the understanding of salvation the second chapter, the confession of faith, is important. It is said that on both christology and soteriology, two areas of disagreement during Reformation times, fundamental agreement is accomplished between the Roman Catholic Church and (some of) the Reformed Churches. The first part of chapter two seeks to picture the common convictions about Jesus Christ as the only mediator between God and humankind (§ 64-76)³³⁰. In the second section the doctrine of justification by grace, through faith is reflected on (§ 77-79), in particular the role of the church in it (§ 80-88)³³¹, both reflecting issues that played (play) a fundamental role in the controversy between the Roman Catholic and the Reformed tradition.

The common confession focuses on the Christ-event, in particular his death and resurrection; he is called the mediator between God and humankind. In him God has brought salvation seeking out humankind. Salvation is explicated as a given reconciliation and a strength to work for the fuller reconciliation of all with God and with one another (§ 66). The mystery of death and resurrection is the event

which saves humanity, that is, liberates it from the distress in which it is imprisoned by sin and establishes it in communion of life with God. That event reveals *who God is, who we are and who Christ is* as mediator between God and humankind (§ 68).

The report is Christologically oriented. Salvation takes place in the mystery of death and resurrection. The essence of God, the human being and Christ are revealed in this mystery. God chose us in Christ and loved us unto death. Although God is the acting person - he sent Christ to us - he cannot be seen apart from Christ. Not only death and resurrection are God's saving acts in Christ, also our election before the foundation of the world took place in Christ. In Jesus Christ God even died for us, the sign that God loved us unto death. The close relationship between God and Jesus becomes clear when both are mentioned as transforming the death of Jesus into a saving event.

If the death of Jesus is the work of sinners, God from all eternity has made it one with the design of salvation, accomplishing that life giving work by raising Jesus from the dead. Placed at the heart of human violence, Jesus by his love transformed the work of death into the work of life (§ 69).

The close connection between God and Christ leads to a 'christology from above' as dominant in the report. Christ reveals to us, who God is, who we are, who he is by "the mystery of death and resurrection" (§ 68). Thus the work of Christ reveals his person. There we can learn that Christ's

"the tendency of some differences to grow greater over time so that we are actually heading in divergent directions" (divergences); Mudge/Sesboüé, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, ii.

329 Blancy, 'Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue', *DEM* 855; cf. also *Towards a Common Understanding*, § 89.

330 This agreement was confirmed by the General Council of the WARC at its meeting in 1989, hence before the Final Report was published: "a surprising degree of agreement in the understanding of Christ's unique mediatorship", E. Perret (ed), *Seoul 1989: Proceedings of the 22nd General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) Held at Seoul, Republic of Korea August 15-26, 1989*, Geneva (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) 1990, 231.

331 From the length of the section one might conclude that the function of the church in the process of salvation is more an issue than the justification itself.

role is to be mediator and reconciler between God and humanity and he performs this task of mediation and reconciliation "embodied and located, named and personified in Jesus of Nazareth" (§ 70). In his death and resurrection he surpasses human attempts to find ways of mediating between God and sinful humanity. The Old Covenant is seen as both antithetically the testimony that law, sacrifices, prophecies, wisdom cannot reach the goal, and as the yearning for a mediator, which is answered in the person of Jesus Christ (§ 69). Why especially Jesus' death and resurrection are so important is partly clarified. Jesus' death is regarded as a victory over the powers of death, but it is a victory hidden in the deepest weakness of human nature. Although Jesus' death is the result of human sin, it is changed into a victory of life over death and made one with God's plan of salvation. The dialectics of the cross and resurrection are therefore called a mystery (§ 68.80.83). How this relates to Jesus' life is not elaborated³³². Christ's trinitarian position as a mediator, who could bridge the gap between sinful humanity and God, a cosmic task of reconciliation, forms the cadre of interpretation of his death and resurrection. Jesus' death, of course, is a historical death (i.e. a death which is a consequence of preceding events) accomplished by sinful people, but because God "from eternity has made it one with the design of salvation" his death is first of all a death "which is a victory over the death which touches all" (§ 69) and so it is what we could call 'a death from above', more or less apart from his life. As true God and true human being Christ is the only and perfect mediator, once for all. As the resurrected Lord Christ continues to carry out this mediation.

Only when it comes to the Holy Spirit we can get an impression of the life of Jesus. However, this is mentioned not in order to relate Jesus' life and death with each other, but to picture the position of Christ as the second person of the Trinity. Christ makes clear who is the Holy Spirit. "Finally, the work of Jesus, the Son, reveals to us the role of the Spirit of God who is common to him and to the Father: it reveals to us that God is Triune" (§ 74). Like Christ revealed who God is, he reveals who the Holy Spirit is and thus he reveals the Trinity throughout his work. Hence the soteriology precedes the understanding of Christ's person. Who Christ is follows from what he does, in particular in death and resurrection.

Separation is the key-word to denote the sinful state of human beings. The perspective of salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*) does not play an important role here³³³. Human beings are generally characterized as capable of sin and imprisoned in the bonds of sin from the beginning. They reject God and are aware of their alienation and exile, which is called sin. The separation of human beings from God has also consequences for the human behaviour: hostility is the consequence and sign of separation from God (§ 71). However, though human beings might recognize this separation from God (§ 69b.71), they are not able to overcome this gap by themselves. Only Christ, as mediator can open anew the way of true life (§ 69b). The Old Covenant seems to be an example of how humankind is not able to overcome its separation from God.

The way Christ saves by means of his death and resurrection is described as a work of reconciliation (2.1 Our Lord Jesus Christ: The only Mediator between God and Humankind). Jesus Christ "achieves our reconciliation in all its dimensions: God reconciling humanity, human beings reconciled with each other; and humanity reconciled with God" (§ 71), and so the vertical and horizontal dimensions are interdependent. Because of this term reconciliation, the

332 This can also be seen in § 70 where, parallel to the apostles' (perhaps more than to the Nicene) creed, the salvific work of Jesus is not linked with his life but only with his death and resurrection: "Mediation and reconciliation have been embodied and located, named and personified in Jesus of Nazareth..., condemned and executed at Jerusalem..., resurrected by the power of God and placed at God's right hand".

333 Cf. the historical approach in *Presence of Christ in Church and World*.

report is very much focused on a 'Pauline' interpretation of salvation in Christ, although other words are used as well to describe the essence of salvation in Christ, like redemption, peace, righteousness, sanctification, end of condemnation and transformation of our world in God ³³⁴. Both reconciliation and the other terms used come from letters by Paul, except for a citation from Hebrews. Although the word 'reconciliation' (*katallagè*) is not very common in Paul's vocabulary, and even rare elsewhere in the New Testament, in the report it denotes the essential outcome of Christ's person and work. It is by no means accidentally that the report combines a concentration on Jesus' death and resurrection as salvific event with this specific type of Pauline interpretation (as reconciliation), since the life of Jesus plays a subordinated role in Paul's letters.

The implication of reconciliation is given in § 68: The event of Jesus' death and resurrection "saves humanity, that is, liberates it from the distress in which it is imprisoned by sin and establishes it in community of life with God". The essence of the symbolism of reconciliation is that human beings are separated from God. The access to him is obstructed. However, God as acting subject has overcome the division through his love to the end in the death and resurrection of his Son for us. The report reflects this field of interpretation. God is called the "One who has loved us unto death" (§ 69); and "a God of tenderness and mercy" (§ 69). The death of Christ itself is not interpreted as being necessary for God, e.g. as satisfaction or ransom³³⁵, but as an evil human work of causing his death, not so much in the historical sense but in an anthropological sense. Jesus' death shows us who we are: human beings capable of sin, hiding from God and separated from him (§ 69b).

The second concept to denote salvation in chapter II is the concept of justification (2.2 Justification by Grace, through Faith). Although reconciliation is the main concept in the previous section it is clear that the concept of justification has to be clarified because of its role in the traditional polemic between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Both concepts are mentioned juxtaposed³³⁶, although the use of justification has a particular intention. The concept of justification plays an important role in the debate on the kind of relationship that exists between God and the human being in the appropriation of salvation in Christ, the relationship between personal faith and grace. Roman Catholics and Reformed together affirm that "our justification is a totally gratuitous work accomplished by God in Christ. We confess that the acceptance in faith of justification is itself a gift of grace" (§ 77). The result of this gracious gift of salvation is described by a third concept, that of liberation.

We receive from Christ our justification, that is our pardon, our liberation, our life with God. By faith we are liberated from our presumption that we can somehow save ourselves; by faith we are comforted in spite of our terror of losing ourselves. We are set at liberty to open ourselves to the sanctification which God wills for us (§ 78).

This reflects the initial explanation of salvation in Christ, that he "liberates it (humanity, RL) from the distress in which it is imprisoned by sin and establishes it in communion of life with God" (§ 68). In short, in Christ we are reconciled to God and one another, justified by grace through faith, liberated from sin and in communion with God.

Only three sections are devoted to the issue of justification. This shows that it is not

³³⁴ Cf. § 71.

³³⁵ Although one text is mentioned where the idea of giving his life as a ransom is mentioned (1 Tim 2,5-6 (§ 69c)).

³³⁶ "To speak in this way of our justification and reconciliation with God is to say that faith is above all a reception..." (§ 78).

considered to be a (big) problem any more between Reformed and Roman Catholics. God in Christ is the author of salvation and faith is not a human work but "a reception of a gift of God" (§ 78). The grace of faith makes us recognize that Jesus Christ "saves us and brings us into communion of life with God. To rely for salvation on anything other than faith, would be to diminish the fullness accomplished and offered in Jesus Christ" (§ 77). The relationship between justification and sanctification, the fourth concept of salvation, is clarified in § 79.

Justification by faith brings with it the gift of sanctification, which can grow continuously as it creates life, justice and liberty... Faith receives freely and bears testimony actively, as it works itself out through love (§ 79).

The section called 'The Calling of the Church; Its Role in Justification by Grace Through Faith' (chapter 2.3 - § 80-88) already touches the main theme of the report, ecclesiology. Justification does not take place in isolation, but in the community of believers in which Christ is present and active or it is "ordered toward the gathering of such a community" (§ 80). The church is the place where believers can share in the salvific activity of Christ Jesus (§ 85). The church lives not solely by the promise, but by the gift of salvation, which is irreversible and definitive and universal. "Justification by grace through faith is given us in the Church" (§ 86). This does not make the church an independent or complementing mediator next to Christ. On the contrary, the church is founded on Christ, in particular on the mystery of the Christ event, which is his death and resurrection.

Christ himself acts in the Church... enabled and empowered by the Spirit, by whom Christ calls to unite human beings to himself, to express his reality through them, to associate them in the mystery of his self-offering for them (§ 80).

Only in dependency does the church fulfil its role as place, instrument and minister of salvation, which means that it has been chosen by God to preach "the word of salvation and celebrate(s) the sacraments" (§ 86). However, "this does not restrict saving grace to these means" (§ 87). God is free to share his grace in the way he wishes to do. The report states, nevertheless, that God's call to salvation "is always related to the Church, in that God's call always has as its purpose the building up of the Church which is the body of Christ" (§ 87). Hence the church is part of God's eternal plan of salvation for humanity.

The novelty introduced by the incarnation of the Word does not call into question the continuity of the history of salvation... For God has not rejected his people (Rom 11,1) The continued existence of the chosen people is an integral part of the history of salvation (§ 81).

In the section on christology the emphasis is laid on Christ and the supra-historical mystery of his death and resurrection in relation to a general, non-historical description of humanity. Here the report deals with the church as a historical phenomenon and a consequence of the coming of Christ which brought a radical change in the world in the sight of God. By calling the history of the old covenant a history in which the church is already present, the report tries to underline continuation in the history of salvation. The continuity of the history of salvation is 'guaranteed' by a christological interpretation of the history where the church is already present, even in the old covenant. Therefore, the report can hold that "the continued existence of the chosen people is an integral part of the history of salvation" (§ 81). At the same time however, it wants to face the radical newness of the coming of Christ (salvation once for all and universal) and the result that the church now lives by the gift of salvation as well. Hence it can be minister and instrument of God's salvation in word and sacrament.

This forms the basis for the questions on ecclesiology in the third chapter. Although two

conceptions of understanding the Church and the way it fulfils its ministerial and instrumental role (*Creaturi Verbi* and Sacrament of Grace) are seen as complementary, they still point to the difference in the way the church plays a role in salvation. Indeed, the church depends fully on the transcendental gift of God as the basis for "its activity of service for the salvation of humanity. But we do not yet understand the nature of this salutary activity in the same way" (§ 112). A similar question returns when both parties speak about the continuity of the church throughout the ages. In particular the problem of the sinfulness of the church is not solved. Although the gift of God to the Church is said to be irrevocable, it is part of the Reformed tradition to think that there are moments when the church's "true identity is obscured by sin beyond recognition" (§ 122). Roman Catholics hold that despite all human sin it never "nullifies its mission of grace and salvation and never falsifies essentially the proclamation of the truth" (§ 122). Hence the instrumentality of the church can be completely obscured in the Reformed opinion, but not in the Roman Catholic view. This again relates to the question of the visible church. Whereas the Roman Catholics lay such an emphasis on the church as an active instrument in the appropriation of salvation, they tend to identify the Roman Catholic Church with the church of Christ. The *substitutit in* of the Vatican Council obstructs an exclusive identification, but Reformed are still troubled by the special relationship insisted upon by the Roman Catholic Church to the Church of Christ and the hesitations of the Roman Church to affirm fully the ecclesiality of the Reformed Churches.

Conclusions

- (1) In this report the common confession of Roman Catholics and Reformed reveals a preference for a theology and ecclesiology based on a soteriologically determined christology. Cross and resurrection (the life of Jesus is considerably less important) are both the crucial moments for salvation and for the revelation of God, Christ and humanity. In and through Christ the triune God reconciles the world to himself.
- (2) The role Jesus plays in salvation is the role of the 'only mediator'. In particular his death and resurrection are seen as the events which save humanity. In them, God as acting subject has overcome the separation in which humanity is imprisoned by sin and establishes it in communion of life with himself. Reconciliation seems to be the concept that best describes the salvation offered by Christ.
- (3) Although reconciliation is a very important salvific concept, it is the concept of justification that needs clarification because of its traditional position in the discussions between Reformed and Roman Catholics. They both agree that the church is regarded as the place where justification takes place. Its role as instrument and minister depends on God's initiative. Nevertheless it is precisely the nature of this instrumentality and ministry about which problems arise, because the forms of the church's historical existence are differently appreciated by Roman Catholics and Reformed. Reformed feel uneasy about a too close identification of church and salvation (church as 'sacrament'), whereas Roman Catholics are afraid of a too great distance between the two (church as *creatura verbi*). Similarly Reformed insist more on the promise of the 'not yet' of complete salvation (or kingdom) and Roman Catholics tend to emphasize the reality of the 'already there' of salvation, albeit incomplete (§ 122).
- (4) Salvation is mainly described by two concepts, namely reconciliation and justification and to a lesser extent with a third, liberation. Reconciliation is used throughout the

report and relates to the sinful state of humanity towards God and towards each other which is called separation or alienation, also in the ecumenical sense of separated churches (cf. the title of the first chapter 'Towards a Reconciliation of Memories'). Reconciliation signifies that through death and resurrection the gap between God and human beings and consequently between human beings and human beings is bridged. "In that Good News we Christians already find our reconciliation and the strength to work for the fuller reconciliation of all with God and with each other" (§ 66). It seems as if reconciliation is the most relevant concept in the report. The concept refers to the actual state of humanity and the churches, as being alienated and separated from God and each other. Reconciliation is a gift and a task which lies ahead for the churches. The appropriation of our reconciliation in Christ is described by the concept of justification. It does not function here as a criteriological concept, but it pictures the basic implications of our appropriation of salvation held by both the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches. We are saved by grace, accepted and received in faith and called to bear fruits through the gift of sanctification. The third concept is liberation. It does not play an important role, although it is mentioned several times as the description of salvation and justification (§ 68 and § 78).

Chapter 5

The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, 1986

The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (*ERCDOM*) took place from 1977 until 1984 and is an exponent of the growing relationships between the Evangelicals and the 'traditional' ecumenical field³³⁷. Three meetings were held during these seven years, in Venice (1977)³³⁸, Cambridge (1982)³³⁹ and Landévennec, France (1984). The dialogue produced one report, named after the title of the dialogue: *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission*. It was published in 1986³⁴⁰. The participants³⁴¹ from the Roman Catholic side were named by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. They were official delegates and spoke from the point of view of the official teaching of their church, using mainly documents from the Second Vatican Council (see notes). The evangelical participants belonged to a number of churches and Christian organizations and did not represent any international body, although all were associated with the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. They attended in a purely private capacity.

The theological basis for entering into a dialogue was seen in the convergence in certain areas of understanding the nature of mission by both the Evangelicals and the Roman Catholic Church. These convergences emerged from the comparison of the *Lausanne Covenant*³⁴², issued by the International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne 1974 and the apostolic adhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*³⁴³ (*Evangelization of the Modern World*) issued by Pope Paul VI in 1975.

The dialogue was not conceived as a step towards church unity negotiations, because Evangelicals as such do not constitute an ecclesiological body. At the first meeting it was stated that "the main purpose of the dialogue was to make a theological investigation into areas of convergences and divergences in our understanding of mission, with particular reference to the meaning of salvation and conversion"³⁴⁴. The final document, issued seven years later, concludes in a similar way that *ERCDOM* "was not conceived as a step towards Church unity negotiations. Rather it has been a search for such common ground as might be discovered between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics as they each try to be more faithful in their obedience to mission."³⁴⁵. Therefore the report is not an official 'agreed statement', but a record of the ideas shared to the benefit of local encounters between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics.

In 1993 Evangelicals (now representing the World Evangelical Fellowship) and Roman Catholics began a new series of dialogues. Due to some Roman Catholic dissatisfaction about the delineation of Roman Catholic theological positions by Evangelicals in the book *Roman Catholicism*³⁴⁶ a preparatory meeting

337 Cf. M.E. Brinkman, 'The Common Challenge to Ecumenicals and Evangelicals: An Ecumenical Appraisal', *Exchange* 23/3 (1994) 191-199; D.J. Bosch, '"Ecumenicals" and "Evangelicals": A Growing Relationship?', *ER* 40 (1988) 485-472; P. Hocken, 'Ecumenical Dialogue: The Importance of Dialogue with Evangelicals and Pentecostals', *OiC* 30/2 (1994) 101-123.

338 Cf. 'An Evangelical/Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission', *ISer* 35/3-4 (1977) 6.

339 Cf. *ISer* 49/2-3 (1982) 61-62.

340 B. Meeking/J. Stott (ed), *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission 1977-1984: A Report*, Exeter (Paternoster Press/Eerdmans) 1986. The report was also published as 'The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, 1977-1984: A Report', *ISer* 60/1-2 (1986) 71-97, including one note (no. 32 with a reference to the 1985 Encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Slavorum Apostoli*).

341 Three participants from each side, Donald Cameron, Martin Goldsmith and John Stott (evangelicals) and Basil Meeking, Th. Stransky, Joan Chatfield (Roman Catholics) attended all meetings; the other 25 participants attended only one or two meetings; cf. *ERCDOM* 7 (Introduction, 1). (The numbers refer to the page numbers of the Paternoster/Eerdmans edition, see former note; between brackets we mention the number of the chapter and of the section).

342 J.W.R. Stott, *The Lausanne Covenant: An Exposition and Commentary*, Minneapolis (World Wide Publications) 1975.

343 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, London 1975.

344 'An Evangelical/Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission', *ISer* 35/3-4 (1977) 6.

345 *ERCDOM* 10 (Introduction, 3).

346 P.G. Schrottenboer (ed), *Roman Catholicism: A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective*, Grand Rapids (Baker

between the PCPCU and the WEF was held in Budapest, 1990, followed by the Venice consultation in 1993, which actually went beyond the narrower scope of the book *Roman Catholicism*. At the end of the meeting both sides expressed the wish to continue and in 1997 a consultation took place in Tantur (Jerusalem) on 'Church and Mission', a theme close to the theme of *ERCDOM*³⁴⁷. Afterwards meetings took place in Williams Bay, USA (1999) and Chicago (2001). Although progress was been made, it is clear that the goal of this dialogue is not the search for unity but better mutual understanding and improvement of relations.

The theme of the Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue (*ERCDOM*) is Christian mission. Its intention is to provide Evangelicals and Roman Catholics with better opportunities to work together in their common witness. In spite of this particular focus there is, nevertheless, a broad attention is paid to many questions outside the strict missiological setting: e.g. revelation, Christology and soteriology are dealt with in relation to missiological questions.

The report consists of seven chapters: Revelation and Authority (i); The Nature of Mission (ii); The Gospel of Salvation (iii); Our Response in the Holy Spirit to the Gospel (iv); The Church and the Gospel (v); The Gospel and Culture (vi); The Possibility of Common Witness (vii). The first chapter is a kind of *prolegomenon* which pays attention to some traditional issues of disagreement which have to be clarified or agreed on in order to talk about mission anyhow³⁴⁸. Then the main topic, the understanding of mission, is discussed, followed by a chapter about the content of the message proclaimed, i.e. salvation. Chapter four deals with the theme that evangelism does not only imply a proclamation of Christ, but it includes 'conversion' as well. The church in its relationship to the gospel is discussed in the fifth chapter and finally *ERCDOM* pays attention to the relationship of gospel and culture.

The third chapter is 'The Gospel of Salvation', on which we will concentrate. It is divided into five sections: (1) Human need; (2) The Person of Jesus Christ; (3) The Work of Jesus Christ; (4) The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ; (5) The Meaning of Salvation; followed by a rather large appendix on The Role of Mary in Salvation.

The understanding of salvation is characterized by an human-oriented approach. The chapter starts by focusing on the human need as presupposition for salvation.

Diagnosis must always precede prescription. So, although human need is not strictly part of the good news, it is an essential background to it. If the gospel is good news of salvation this is because human beings are sinners who need to be saved³⁴⁹.

The human condition is described in two ways. First from a positive point of view: human beings are created by, for and in the image God; "sin has defaced but not destroyed this purpose and this image (Gen. 9,6; James 3,9)"³⁵⁰. Every human being has an innate need of salvation. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics agree on this. Our human condition is, secondly, described from a more negative perspective: human beings are submitted to original sin. Sin is the reason why we have to be saved. We have lost our right relationship with God which leads to disorder in human nature and relationships, and so we are inclined to displease God. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics do not agree as to what degree the sinful human condition is affected. The Evangelical position is that original sin leads to a wholly corrupt human nature bereft of free

Book House) 1992³.

347 Cf. 'Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council, November 13-18, 1995', *ISer* 91/1-2 (1996) 45.

348 "For there can be no mission without a message, no message without a definition of it, and no definition without agreement as to how, or on what basis, it shall be defined" *ERCDOM* 15-16 (i).

349 *ERCDOM* 39 (iii, 1).

350 *ERCDOM* 39 (iii, 1).

will: "original sin has distorted every part of human nature"³⁵¹. Roman Catholics understand original sin as causing injury and disorder "which has weakened - though not destroyed - human free will"³⁵². Despite the difference in understanding sin and in the language used³⁵³ both parties "agree that all are sinners and that all stand in need of a radical salvation which includes deliverance from the power of evil, together with reconciliation to God and adoption into his family"³⁵⁴. Since the 'diagnosis' of the human predicament implicates that humanity is in need of salvation because of original sin and since both parties are convinced that humanity cannot save itself, the 'solution' is to be found in Jesus Christ.

The radical salvation which human beings need has been achieved by Jesus Christ. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are agreed about the centrality of Christ and of what God has done through him for salvation³⁵⁵.

The christocentric solution of the problem induces a characterization of the person and the work of Jesus Christ. The person of Jesus Christ is introduced 'from below':

Jesus of Nazareth was a man, who went about doing good, teaching with authority, proclaiming the kingdom of God, and making friends with sinners to whom he offered pardon... He fulfilled the perfect obedience of the Servant in going even to death on the cross. Then God raised him from the dead, confirming that he was from the beginning the Son he claimed to be (Ps 2,7)³⁵⁶.

From this perspective a shift to an approach 'from above' is made which culminates in a common statement on the incarnation in terms of the Chalcedon Definition stating that

the Incarnation of the Son was an objective event in history, in which the divine Word took upon himself our human nature. Within a single person were joined full divinity and full humanity³⁵⁷.

This twofold approach - a christology from below and from above united in a common recognition of the incarnation - which is supported by both Roman Catholics and Evangelicals returns in the section on the work of Christ.

It was the historic person, Jesus of Nazareth, fully God and fully human, through whom the Father acted for the redemption and reconciliation of the world... Because he was human he could represent us and identify with us in our weakness. Because he was God he could bear our sin and destroy the power of evil³⁵⁸.

Although the significance of the incarnation is acknowledged by both Roman Catholics and

351 *ERCDOM* 40 (iii, 1).

352 *ERCDOM* 40 (iii, 1).

353 "Roman Catholics think Evangelicals overstate the corruption of human beings by affirming their 'total depravity' (...), while Evangelicals think Roman Catholics underestimate it and are therefore unwisely optimistic about the capacity, ability and desire of human beings to respond to the grace of God", *ERCDOM* 40 (iii, 1).

354 *ERCDOM* 40 (iii, 1).

355 *ERCDOM* 41 (iii, 2). Cf. also the third 'common conviction' concerning salvation in chapter 2: "There is only one Saviour and only one gospel. There is no other name but Christ's, through whom anyone may be saved (Acts 4,12). So all who receive salvation are saved by the free initiative of God through the grace of Christ", *ERCDOM* 34 (ii,4); and the opening of the section on the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ: "In a world of increasing religious pluralism we affirm together the absolute uniqueness of Jesus Christ. He was unique in his person, in his death and in his resurrection. Since in no other person has God become human, died for the sins of the world and risen from death, we declare that he is the only way to God (Jn 14,6), the only Saviour (Acts 4,12) and the only Mediator (1 Tim 2,5). No one else has this qualifications" (*ERCDOM* 44, [iii, 4]).

356 *ERCDOM* 41 (iii, 2).

357 *ERCDOM* 41 (iii, 2).

358 *ERCDOM* 42 (iii, 2).

Evangelicals, there is, however, a difference in understanding the nature of the incarnation with regard to the work of Christ, in particular to his death. It is agreed that "the work of redemption was accomplished supremely through the death of Jesus Christ although we acknowledge the unity of his incarnate life, atoning death and bodily resurrection"³⁵⁹. It seems, nevertheless, that Evangelicals are more inclined to regard the incarnation 'only' as a necessary condition for salvation through Jesus' death, whereas Roman Catholics give the incarnation itself a salvific meaning. This can be concluded from the interpretation of Jesus' death. For Evangelicals Jesus' death is substitutionary.

In his death he did something which he did not do during his life. He actually 'became sin' for us (2 Cor 5,21) and 'became a curse' for us (Gal 3,13). Thus God himself in Christ propitiated his own wrath, in order to avert it from us. In consequence, having taken our sin, he gives us his righteousness. We stand accepted by God in Christ, not because Christ offered the Father our obedience, but because he bore our sin and replaced it with his righteousness³⁶⁰.

In this substitutionary interpretation of Jesus' death any reference to Jesus' life is absent. His death differs, on the contrary, qualitatively from his life. The work of redemption takes place between God and Christ through the events on the cross. Christ passively undergoes the punishment in our place and we are saved by the initiative of God who through the propitiation can accept us as justified human beings.

Roman Catholics have a different comprehension of Christ's death because they express

Christ's death more in terms of 'solidarity'. In their understanding Jesus Christ in his death made a perfect offering of love and obedience to his Father, which recapitulated his whole life. In consequence, we can enter into the sacrifice of Christ and offer ourselves to our Father in and with him. For he became one with us in order that we might become one with him³⁶¹.

In this view Jesus' death as *recapitulatio* is completely in line with his life. His life culminates in his death and in fact the incarnation itself is the salvific event. In his death in our place he does the same as he did during his life, not as an object of God's propitiation, but as acting subject of perfect obedience to God. It seems that Roman Catholics hold on to the statement that both parties acknowledge the unity of life, death and resurrection more than the Evangelicals³⁶².

So what we see is that, despite the partial agreement on the person of Christ (incarnation), as a consequence of the difference in understanding the human condition (anthropology), the work of Christ (atonement) as the solution for the human predicament is interpreted in different ways as well. And so is the question of the appropriation of salvation. Both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics agree that God's gift of salvation needs a human response, which is conversion.

This response, however, does not depend on the efforts of the human person, but on the initiative of God... it is the Holy Spirit who opens our minds and hearts so that we can accept and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord (1 Cor 12,3) and live as his disciples³⁶³.

359 *ERCDOM* 42-43 (iii, 3).

360 *ERCDOM* 43 (iii, 3).

361 *ERCDOM* 43 (iii, 3).

362 Compare also differences in accent in the understanding of evangelism by Evangelicals and Roman Catholics in the Introduction. The former quote from the *Lausanne Covenant*, § 4: "To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised...". The latter state, from *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, § 22 that "there is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed", *ERCDOM* 9-10 (Introduction).

363 *ERCDOM* 55 (iv, 1).

How the relation between God's gift and the human response is considered remains an area of disagreement. In the report the Roman Catholic understanding of salvation is rather objective and so the efficacy of the objective salvation through Christ is not made dependent on its subjective appropriation.

... if human sin is universal, all the more is Christ's salvation universal. If everyone born into the world stands in solidarity with the disobedience of the first Adam, still the human situation as such has been changed by the definitive event of salvation, that is the Incarnation of the Word, his death, his resurrection and his gift of the Spirit³⁶⁴.

Because we are human, salvation in Christ is *in principio* effective for every one. Faith and being in Christ are fundamental to this position but they are not an absolute necessity for salvation. "Roman Catholics would expect God's mercy to be exercised effectively in benevolent action of his grace for the majority of humankind, unless they specifically reject his offer"³⁶⁵.

Evangelicals consider the present efficacy of salvation in an objective way as well. They agree with the Roman Catholic position in the universal presence of Christ, however as potential Saviour, not as actual Saviour. He is the actual Saviour insofar as his offer is accepted in faith and salvation is experienced. Therefore they (wish to) make a distinction between those who are saved and those who are not.

Both positions have consequences for the way they think about salvation of non-Christians. Roman Catholics refer to Vatican II and state that "those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or his Church"³⁶⁶. Evangelicals

insist, however, that according to the New Testament those outside Christ are 'perishing', and that they can receive salvation only in and through Christ³⁶⁷.

Although Evangelicals take up different positions regarding the consequences of those who do not answer, willing or unwilling, to the potential salvation in Christ³⁶⁸, it is clear that their point

364 ERCDOM 45 (iii, 4).

365 ERCDOM 35 (ii, 4).

366 ERCDOM 46 (iii, 4) from *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

367 ERCDOM 46 (iii, 4). See also the second phase of the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogue in which the problem is dealt with in a similar way. Whereas Roman Catholics would emphasize that faith and experience occur within the church, although not exclusively, and Pentecostals underscore the individual side of faith and experience, although they do not deny the importance of the Church, both do not agree as to whether non-Christians may receive the life of the Holy Spirit. "A literal reading of Scripture insists on salvation and grace within the Church and seems to exclude non-Christians" (from the Agreed Account, Rome 1977 in J.L. Sandidge, *Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982): A Study in Developing Ecumenism 2*, Studies In The Intercultural History Of Christianity 44, Frankfurt am Main (Peter Lang) 1987, 92). Roman Catholics refer to the Vatican Council II: "The Church is ... necessary for salvation" (Constitution on the Church § 14). Pentecostals "retain their interpretation of the Scripture that non-Christians are excluded from the life of the Spirit ... (John 3,3)" (§ 14). Catholics however, are convinced that because of God's saving love in Christ all are called to faith in Christ and salvation (Constitution on the Church § 1,16). So Roman Catholics primarily consider the church to be vital for salvation but this does not exclude some other unseen ways that God may have to fulfil his plan of salvation. Pentecostals primarily consider the individual regeneration as vital for salvation, and this excludes any other way to salvation.

368 The notion of 'implicit faith', that shows parallels to the concept of 'anonymous Christianity' is not entirely foreign to some Evangelical circles; cf. M.J. Erickson, 'Evangelical Christology and Soteriology Today', *Interpretation* 49/3 (1995) 264.

of view urges them to proclaim the gospel of salvation with every possible effort. The radical objective approach of salvation in the sense that the blessings from Christ's death

are given by God solely through his grace, without respect to our merit, and are received solely through faith. When we are accepted by Christ, we are part of his people, since all his people are 'in' him³⁶⁹.

is linked with a radical subjective approach in the sense that without human response salvation remains potential. So when it comes to the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation we see a somewhat paradoxal situation. Contrary to the salvation achieved through Christ alone, once and for all, without any involvement of the church, the proclaiming church is indispensable when it comes to the subjective appropriation of this realized salvation to human beings, to make the finished work of Christ work.

On the one hand the church does not save but simply presents the message of Christ's salvation as the only path of salvation. On the other hand the church is very important as people should respond to the offer of salvation through the work of the Holy Spirit being joined to the nurturing community of God³⁷⁰.

In other words, Evangelicals state that "the gospel reconciles us to God through Christ and thus makes us part of his people"³⁷¹ and therefore consider the church to be "more a result than an agent of the salvation through the gospel"³⁷², but because it is essential that this result visibly comes true in reality, those who already belong to the 'result' bear a substantial responsibility to call "those outside to come as children of the Father into the fullness of eternal life in Christ by the Spirit, and into the joy of a loving community in the fellowship of the Church"³⁷³. The church as missionary community is not only the result, but also actively involved in bringing about this result. Therefore Evangelicals can say that "the Church is both the fruit and agent of the gospel, since it is through the gospel that the Church spreads and through the Church that the gospel spreads"³⁷⁴.

The Roman Catholic understanding of the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation is that

the gospel centres in the person, message and gracious activity of Christ. His life, death and resurrection are the foundation of the Church, and the Church carries the living gospel to the world. The Church is a real sacrament of the gospel... the gospel is found within the life of his people, and thus we find reconciliation with God³⁷⁵.

The church itself has salvific dimensions. On the one hand it is already a 'sacrament of salvation', on the other it is not analogous with salvation.

It is the mission of the Church to anticipate the Kingdom of God as liberation from the slavery of sin, from slavery to the Law and from death... But the Spirit of God is always at work throughout human history to bring about the liberating reign of God³⁷⁶

369 *ERCDOM* 43 (iii, 3).

370 C.J. Fensham, 'An Evaluation of the Nature of Mission and the Gospel of Salvation in the 'Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission', *Missionalia* 16/1 (1988) 32.

371 *ERCDOM* 44 (iii, 3).

372 K. Mc Namara, 'A Review/Appreciation of the Document', *ISer* 60 (1986) 100. Evangelicals regard the core of the gospel to be the reconciliation between the individual person and God, and only as reconciled person we are made members of the community, whereas Roman Catholics situate the gospel in the life of the community where we find reconciliation with God.

373 *ERCDOM* 31 (ii, 1).

374 *ERCDOM* 68 (v, 4).

375 *ERCDOM* 43-44 (iii, 3).

376 *ERCDOM* 30-31 (ii, 1).

The link between God's gift of salvation and the proclamation by the church is, in the Roman Catholic perspective, not a necessary link, in terms of salvation being dependent on the church's proclamation³⁷⁷. Both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics affirm the absolute uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ. He is the only way to God, the only Saviour and the only Mediator. The church "has an irreplaceable responsibility to announce the good news of salvation to all peoples, that all who hear the gospel have an obligation to respond to it..."³⁷⁸. For Roman Catholics, however, this does not mean that outside the Christian communion there is no salvation. There already exists a mysterious relationship between those who seek God, those who, without knowing but through God's grace, do his will³⁷⁹ and the church. Therefore the task of the church is not to lead the people to salvation through an urgent proclamation of the gospel (otherwise those outside Christ would be 'perishing'), but its task is to awaken the response of all human beings, already redeemed by Christ, but not (fully) aware of it. Analogous to Christ's solidarity with us we also "can enter into the sacrifice of Christ and offer ourselves to the Father in and with him" (§ 3.3). The church has therefore a very important task because as the visible sign of the redemption of humankind it communicates the truth and grace of Christ to all³⁸⁰, but its role is less crucial, less urgent than in the Evangelical understanding.

The meaning of salvation is not represented by a single concept or term. It is defined as "the restoration of the broken relationship between sinful humanity and a saving God"³⁸¹. The objective side, the mighty acts of God through Christ in history, is characterized by the salvific purpose of God for the whole creation, which goal is the God-centred kingdom. The kingdom has arrived through Christ and is a synonym for salvation. However, the kingdom is still under the verdict of the 'not yet' and the return of the Lord. In the Roman Catholic understanding the fulfilment of time is a rather fluent process in the sense that

the whole of humanity is in a collective history which God makes to be a history of salvation. The *mysterion* of the gospel is the announcement by the Church to the world of this merging of the history of salvation with the history of the world³⁸².

The other aspect in the objective side of salvation, the redemption through Christ is in line with this merging of salvation history and world history. Comprehended as 'solidarity' the fundament of redemption is, according to the Roman Catholic view in the report, the incarnation, which also in a way is the merging of God's and world history in one person. Hence the interpretation of Christ's death as "he became one of us in order that we might become one with him"³⁸³. In Evangelical thinking the fulfilment of the 'not yet' of the kingdom is not a merging of two histories into one, but rather a personal transition from one state into the other:

Though all in Adam die, not all are automatically in Christ. So life in Christ has to be received by grace with repentance through faith. With yearning Evangelicals plead for a response to the atoning work of

377 "Catholics do not deny the urgency of proclamation nor the necessity of accepting the message... The difference is rather on the question whether this is a necessity for salvation. Catholics answer this question negative", Fensham, 'An Evaluation of the Nature of Mission and the Gospel of Salvation', 29.

378 *ERCDOM* 45 (iii, 4).

379 "They can be saved by Christ, in a mysterious relation to the Church" (*ERCDOM* 46 [iii, 4]).

380 In the chapter on the Nature of Mission it was already said that, whether or not salvation is possible outside the Christian community, the motivation for mission work is (1) "to further the glory of God..."; (2) "to proclaim the Lordship of Christ..."; (3) "to proclaim that Christ has struggled with Satan and dethroned him..."; (4) "to proclaim that man does not live by bread alone"; and (5) to hasten the return of the Lord; *ERCDOM* 35 (ii, 3).

381 *ERCDOM* 48 (iii, 5).

382 *ERCDOM* 31, (ii, 1).

383 *ERCDOM* 43 (iii, 3).

Christ in his death and resurrection. But with sorrow they know that not all who are called are chosen³⁸⁴.

Hence the redemption through Christ, as substitution, makes the transition possible (Christ as potential Saviour), but not actual³⁸⁵.

The concept of the kingdom as the concept that pictures the eschatological implication of salvation plays, however, a minor role in the document. The interpretation of Jesus death tends to reflect more clearly the differences between both communions. Yet the report gives room to a broader understanding as it states that

pastoral, missionary and cultural factors may lead us to stress one or other model of Christ' saving work, the full biblical range of words (e.g. victory, redemption, propitiation, justification, reconciliation) must be preserved, and none may be ignored³⁸⁶.

Given the difficulties between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals in the area of the appropriation of salvation, the understanding of the subjective side of salvation, salvation experience, also generates different accents.

Evangelicals tend to lay more emphasis than Roman Catholics on the necessity of a personal response to, and experience of, God's saving grace. To describe this, again the full New Testament vocabulary is needed (for example, the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, adoption into his family, redemption, the new birth - all of which are gifts brought to us by the Holy Spirit), although Evangelicals still give paramount importance to justification by grace through faith³⁸⁷.

It is clear that these concepts, more or less, imply an individual understanding of salvation in terms of a penitential interpretation of the relationship between God and the human being. Roman Catholics do not have such a preferential interpretation. They do not exclude the Evangelical emphasis on Jesus' death as substitution for, reconciliation or justification of the individual, but they do not want to limit the understanding of salvation to a certain interpretation.

The overall concept used is 'deliverance'³⁸⁸, both in a negative and positive way. It means rescue from all kinds of misery³⁸⁹ and deliverance into the freedom of Christ. This freedom brings human fulfilment in terms of communion. "It is essentially becoming 'sons in the Son' and therefore brothers to each other"³⁹⁰. In a way these two complementary interpretations reflect the Evangelical, more individual, and Roman Catholic, more communal, points of views. Both parties affirm the social dimensions of salvation because God's saving action through Christ has manifested socio-political consequences. Therefore

we are agreed that 'mission' relates to every area of human need, both spiritual and social. Social responsibility is an integral part of evangelization; and the struggle for justice can be a manifestation of

384 *ERCDOM* 31 (ii, 1).

385 It is noteworthy that several meanings of the resurrection, as part of the work of Christ, are accepted by both parties without mentioning any preference for a single meaning, *ERCDOM* 44 (iii, 3).

386 *ERCDOM* 44 (iii, 3).

387 *ERCDOM* 47 (iii, 5).

388 One sentence is devoted to some Old Testament models: rescue, healing and restoration. It seems that their relevance is relative because their appropriateness is limited "for those already related to God within the covenant" (*ERCDOM* 47 [iii, 5]). The fact that the sentence is formulated in the past tense does not underline the actuality of the concepts.

389 "rescue from the power of satan, sin and death, from guilt, alienation (estrangement from God), moral corruption, self-centredness, existential despair and fear of the future, including death", *ERCDOM* 47 (iii, 5).

390 *ERCDOM* 47 (iii, 5).

Conclusions

- (1) (2) The question who grants salvation is not elaborated in the report of the *ERCDOM*. For whom salvation is meant gets more attention. The human condition is described in two ways, a positive one and a negative one. The latter one is related to the word 'sin': "Sin is the reason why we have to be saved". Salvation is offered by Christ. For Evangelicals salvation is closely related to Jesus' death. This is not 'just' the consequence of his life, but "in his death he did something which he did not do during his life". Hence Evangelicals tend to see Jesus' death as substitutionary. For Roman Catholics Jesus' death is in perfect accordance with his life. Like he lived his life in obedience, so his death was a consequence of the same obedience.
- (3) The results of the *ERCDOM* reveal a difference in the understanding of salvation by Evangelicals and Roman Catholics³⁹², despite the agreements discovered³⁹³. Both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics agree on the christocentredness of salvation and the need for a free human response to God's gift through Christ. An automatic appropriation of salvation because of Christ is excluded. The heart of the difference lays in the universal efficacy of Christ's salvation, or, from an anthropological perspective, in the nature of the necessity of the human reply in order to become saved. Is salvation in Christ an excluding or including event? Evangelicals tend to see a radical and direct relationship between the actual salvation and the response of the human being. Without an exclusive subjective response, there is little chance for salvation³⁹⁴, although some are more open to a possibility of salvation without Christ than others. Response is a condition for salvation. The difficulty here is the relationship between the response as God's work and as truly human. The predominant line in the report is the Evangelical emphasis on the truly human response and this explains the deep Evangelical concern for mission. Without mission the opportunity to give a personal answer to the offer of salvation is withheld from many people. This could, however, question the reality of the human response as God's work if it depends so heavily on the subject itself. The report pays hardly any attention to this problem. Only once is it said by the Evangelicals that "not all who are called are chosen"³⁹⁵, which 'solves' the problem with God's predestination. Roman Catholics prefer a less strict and personal interpretation of the

391 *ERCDOM* 32 (ii, 3).

392 "Of course the issues such as authority, Church structures, Mariology, salvation in which sadly the participants could not find much common ground remain as reminders of the depth of our divisions...", Mc Namara, 'A Review/Appreciation of the Document', 98. Fensham concludes that "at the level of missionary motivation Evangelicals and Catholics differ as a result of their dissimilar views on salvation" and "the *ERCDOM* report reflects a significant degree of agreement on the nature of mission in spite of fundamental differences on salvation", Fensham, 'An Evaluation of the Nature of Mission and the Gospel of Salvation', 30.

393 "Participants also found themselves more agreed than they had expected on the nature of Christ's saving work and on how Christians are to respond to it", *ISer* 49 (1982) 62; "Weitgehende *Einigkeit* dagegegen bestand im Blick auf die den Glauben normierende Autorität der *Bibel*..., in der *Lehre von Gott* und seiner *Dreieinigkeit*, und insbesondere in allen Grundartikeln des Bekenntnisses zur gott-menschlichen *Person Jesu Christi* und seinem *Heilswerk*", P. Beyerhaus in his Foreword to the German translation of *ERCDOM*: J. Stott/B. Meeking (ed), *Der Dialog über Mission zwischen Evangelikalen und der Römisch-Katholischen Kirche, 1977-1984: Ein Bericht*, Theologie und Dienst 52, Wuppertal (Brockhaus) 1987, 4-5. It is surprising that he mentions Christ's saving work as a point on which far-reaching agreement was achieved (cf. previous note).

394 "Evangelicals are therefore less optimistic about the salvation of those who have no personal relationship to God through Christ", *ERCDOM* 35 (ii, 4).

395 *ERCDOM* 31 (ii, 1).

need of a human response. Salvation does not depend on our exclusive subjective response, but on God's work through Christ. Although Evangelicals maintain as well the objectivity of salvation through Christ, they regard it as something which stands in contrast with the world and which can only be appropriated through a personal answer. In the Roman Catholic view the objectivity of salvation does not exclude the world but includes it, hence salvation history merges with the world's history. Unless someone explicitly rejects God's salvific work in the world (s)he is part of it. The human response is not a condition for salvation but a part of salvation. The above mentioned differences play a role throughout the report and Evangelical and Roman Catholic positions are mentioned next to each other. They indeed reflect a difference in the understanding of salvation. This sometimes leads to an overstatement of the differences. The meaning of e.g. the word 'gospel' as given by God through his grace, without respect to our merit, through faith (Evangelical), over against understanding the gospel as foundation of and carried by the church, need in no way be mutual exclusive. The report itself says that different opinions exist within one and the same communion. In his evaluative article on ERCDOM Fensham mentions some points where Roman Catholics and (some) Evangelicals have already more in common than the report shows³⁹⁶.

- (4) The only preference in the understanding of salvation experience (the personal appropriation) is presented by the Evangelicals, when they say they give paramount importance to justification by grace through faith. This is interesting whereas the Reformation view on justification, at least the Lutheran, but also the Reformed, points to the contrast between God's grace and our works. Evangelicals also point to this contrast, in particular regarding the objective salvation. With regard to the subjective appropriation of salvation they seem to view this contrast in a chronological way, more than the existential *simul iustus et peccator* of Lutheranism and to a lesser extent Calvinism. Evangelicals regard the acceptance of justification in faith as a real transfer from one community to another, a transition from a state of non-salvation to salvation. One could say that this real transition from 'world' history to salvation 'history' brings Evangelicals closer to the Roman Catholic understanding of grace understood not only as external grace but also as imparted on the believer. To a certain extent Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are closer in their understanding of the efficacy of salvation than Roman Catholics and, in particular, Lutherans. They differ, however, in the inclusive, gradual and process-like character of the Roman Catholic understanding of efficacy over against their exclusive and radical understanding. "In summary Evangelicals appear to Roman Catholics (to be, RL) more pessimistic about human nature before conversion, but more optimistic about it afterwards, while Evangelicals allege the opposite about Roman Catholics"³⁹⁷. Finally, the aim of the chapter on salvation is "to be faithful to the living core of the Christian faith" and to communicate the gospel in contemporary terms³⁹⁸. It seems as if both parties have been more successful in the former than in the

396 Fensham, 'An Evaluation of the Nature of Mission and the Gospel of Salvation', 35-38. Cf. also P. Hocken who argues for a common witness between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals/Pentecostals: "Thus agreement needs to be on the events... and on their basic salvific content..., not on more developed theologies of atonement and redemption". He seems to refer directly to *ERCDOM* when he states that "To proclaim the *kerygma* with Evangelical and/or Pentecostal Christians is a grace for Catholics because the characteristic differences of emphasis are complementary rather than inherently opposed. The most obvious instance is the complementarity of the Evangelical emphasis on the 'substitutionary atonement' (Christ took our place) and the Catholic preference for the language of 'representation' and 'solidarity' (Christ represents all humanity before the Father). One without the other leads to imbalance"; P. Hocken, 'Ecumenical Issues in Evangelization', *OiC* 31/1 (1995) 14.

397 *ERCDOM* 61-62 (iv, 4).

398 *ERCDOM* 39 (iii).

latter. The chapter is based on anthropological analysis and infers that there is a universal human need of salvation, in particular because of the intervention of original sin. The rather 'vertical' and individual terminology of original sin, especially on the Evangelical side is reflected in the perception of the meaning of salvation, which is also coloured by an individual and 'vertical' interpretation. There is no real attempt in the dialogue to relate the understanding of sin and therefore the understanding of salvation to the concrete life of humanity. Moreover, the emphasis on sin of the individual and the personal appropriation of salvation makes it difficult to broaden the understanding of salvation to socio-political issues in which society and social structures play a role³⁹⁹ or to a cosmological meaning of salvation. Some words referring to the present situation are mentioned such as the power of Satan, death, sin, guilt, alienation, moral corruption, self-centredness, existential despair and fear for the future, but they do not show a real concern for the communication of the gospel in contemporary times.

399 "The issue of socio-political involvement appears to have been treated with great care in the dialogue, yet no exact definition of the relationship between evangelism and social action was given, due especially to the diversity in Evangelical views on this matter", Fensham, 'An Evaluation of the Nature of Mission and the Gospel of Salvation', 33. Cf. also the position of Beyerhaus in this issue: "Daß es in der Mission zentral um die Erlösung des Sünders, seine Versöhnung mit Gott und sein ewiges Heil geht, war ein gemeinsames Bekenntnis, in dem wir uns gerade angesichts der sozialpolitischen Umdeutung des Heilsverständnisses, wie es die Verlautbarungen der Genfer Ökumene seit Uppsala 1968 kennzeichnet, in einer gemeinsamen Frontstellung sahen, übrigens auch gegenüber der latein-amerikanischen Theologie der Befreiung. Hier kann man ohne Übertreibung konstatieren, und das ließe sich durch Zitieren aus den einschlägigen missionstheologischen Dokumenten auf beiden Seiten beweisen, daß *Evangelikale und Katholiken* (soweit diese die offizielle kirchliche Haltung vertreten) heute *näher beieinander stehen als Evangelikale und Ökumeniker*", P. Beyerhaus in his Foreword to the German translation of *ERCDOM*: Stott/Meeking (ed), *Der Dialog über Mission zwischen Evangelikalen und der Römisch-Katholischen Kirche*, 5.

Chapter 6

The Methodist-Reformed Dialogue, 1987: *Together in God's Grace*

The dialogue between Methodists and Reformed has been a rather short dialogue until now. Initiated by the WARC⁴⁰⁰ the discussion encompassed only two meetings "at which relations between the two communions were renewed"⁴⁰¹. Representatives (seven of each World Communion) of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Methodist Council met in St. Albans, England, 1985 for a preliminary meeting to draw up a list of traditional points of doctrinal dispute⁴⁰². Those issues were discussed by nine Reformed and ten Methodist representatives (many of them others than in 1985) at the second and major meeting in Cambridge, U.K., 1987. This resulted in the publication of a report called 'Together in God's Grace'⁴⁰³. The conclusion and the recommendations of the report were endorsed by the Executive Committee of the WMC and the Executive Committee of the WARC in 1987. Member churches of both communions were invited to discuss some of the recommendations and to give their opinion on the way how to proceed. In 1989 in Seoul the General Assembly of the WARC recommended that a small joint group would survey "the present state of relations and to suggest ways and steps for advancing towards a fuller expression of unity"⁴⁰⁴.

From the beginning it was clear that there was no need for a extensive series of talks. In fact, the dialogue followed already existing Reformed/Methodist church unions (Canada, Zambia, Australia, India, Italy, Belgium) and co-operation in many parts of the world.

It is obvious that, where there already exists such an agreement on the essential issues of the gospel message, the goal of the dialogue is church union. Where church union has already been accomplished, the report would like to reassure these churches with regard to their unification. "The report thus by implication endorses what has happened in some places, and challenges others to review their present position"⁴⁰⁵.

A great deal of agreement on central aspects of the Christian faith⁴⁰⁶ forms the basis for a fresh study of some issues that still had to be put on the agenda because of disagreement and misunderstanding in earlier and present times: among them the controversy on predestination and free grace, ecclesiology, church and state, the character of sanctification. The main

400 According to L. Vischer in Meyer/Papandreou/Urban/Vischer, *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung*, 307.

401 *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue: Report of the Reformed/Methodist Conversations in 1985 and 1987*, Studies from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches 12, Geneva (WARC) 1988, 3.

402 Statement of the first consultation in *RW* 38/8 (1985) 444-447.452; *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 5-8.

403 'Together in God's Grace: Report of the International Reformed/Methodist Consultation held at Cambridge, United Kingdom, July 23-27, 1987', *RW* 39/8 (1987) 823-829; the same in *ET* 17 (1988) 108-112. The report is without name in: *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 9-14. This edition includes the statement of the first consultation in St. Albans, 5-8 (because the sections are not numbered in the original English version of the text we refer to the page numbers of the WARC edition, mentioned above).

404 E. Perret (ed), *Seoul 1989: Proceedings of the 22nd General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) Held at Seoul, Republic of Korea August 15-26, 1989*, Geneva (WARC) 1990, 230; cf. also H.S. Wilson (ed), *Bilateral Dialogues: The Papers and Findings of the WARC Consultation held from April 21-25, 1992 at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, USA*, Studies from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches 24, Geneva (WARC) 1993, 66-67 for further recommendations how to proceed in the Methodist-Reformed relations.

405 *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 9.

406 The consultation in St. Albans declares: "As Methodists and Reformed Christians, we have affirmed our basic understanding of the gospel message. We recognize each other's baptism, we share the eucharist with an open table for all who love Christ and we recognize each other's ministry. With so much in common, the question inevitably arises, 'Why are we still separate?'" *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 8.

conclusion of the report is that "in particular, we have found that the classical doctrinal issues which we were asked to review ought not to be seen as obstacles to unity between Methodists and Reformed"⁴⁰⁷.

The text of the report mainly deals with the questions of the first consultation, which needed further investigation. The Introduction is followed by the report which starts with an Affirmation of the general agreement on the nature of the gospel and the church. In the section called Explication the respective issues mentioned in St. Albans are addressed: (i) The Tradition and the Traditions⁴⁰⁸; (ii) Grace (fundamental questions about salvation: its origins in the grace of God)⁴⁰⁹; (iii) The Church as covenant community⁴¹⁰; (iv) Church and state⁴¹¹; (v) Perfect salvation (the realization of salvation in the Christian life)⁴¹². The report ends with some conclusions and recommendations.

Salvation plays an important role in this relatively short text. Out of six pages almost two are devoted to 'Grace' and more than half a page to 'Perfect salvation'.

In the report the central point concerning salvation is the appropriation of salvation. There is no attention given to the relationship between God and salvation, which is assumed⁴¹³. Both Methodists and Reformed agree on salvation that

from first to last our salvation depends on the comprehensiveness of God's grace as prevenient, as justifying, as sanctifying, as sustaining, as glorifying"⁴¹⁴.

The traditional difference between the two traditions exists in a different account of "the appropriation of saving grace"⁴¹⁵. The problem concerns the question of God's sovereignty in election and the freedom of the human response, called respectively the Calvinist and Arminianist approach (Wesley is said to have followed Arminianism at this point)⁴¹⁶. Both

407 *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 9.

408 *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 9.

409 *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 10-12.

410 *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 12-13.

411 *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 13.

412 *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 13.

413 The report of the first consultation shows a rather christological concentration in the common witness of both Reformed and Methodists. This is pictured in the first section, 'The Gospel to be Confessed Today'. Christ's work is called the ministry of reconciliation. The heart of human's salvation lies in the love of Christ. He loved his Father in going to the cross and he loved his enemies "taking to himself the worst consequence of sin - separation from the Father" (*Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 5). Christ's death is important, not as condemnation, satisfaction, sacrifice etc, but as utmost consequence of his love. It has brought us redemption, forgiveness of sin and unification to himself. The resurrection is not mentioned as salvific event. Connected with this love is Christ's preaching of the kingly rule of God to the captives, the poor, the blind. Whereas salvation in Christ does not only mean forgiveness of sins but also participation in his life ("we abide in Christ and live by faith in his finished work of redemption", (*Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 6), we, the church can share in his ministry of reconciliation, which means "to reflect in word and life this saving work in Christ and so to point the way to hope and freedom" (*Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 5). This christological outlook can be found as well in the description of the central question about predestination and free will. The suggestion is made to approach this problem in the cadre of "the doctrine of Christ and God's Elect One in whom we receive our standing" (*Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 7). This is, however, not the case in 'Together in God's Grace'.

414 *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 10.

415 *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 10.

416 The report operates a rather stereotypical understanding of Calvinism and Arminianism, despite their admission that not "all in the Reformed tradition subscribe to double predestination, nor all Methodist to the Arminian alternative" (*Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 10).

approaches (1) deny a natural free will, (2) exclude all merit from the human being, and (3) consider all good to come from God's free grace. Nevertheless, Calvinism stresses the lack of human freedom to choose salvation, because freedom was lost in the fall. Hence it denies that human freedom can be greater than God's will to save, otherwise this would denounce God's sovereignty. Wesleyans maintain that human freedom is an illusion if human beings are elected from eternity. They hold that, although we are 'dead' by nature, the prevenient grace offered by Christ's atoning work restores the lost freedom of choice, although it is no guarantee for salvation. This does not confine God's sovereignty, but shows that God was prepared to limit his power so that the human freedom could say 'no' to saving grace. A large emphasis on God's sovereignty and freedom could lead to arbitrariness on the side of God. For Calvinists this belongs to the mystery of God and it is wrong to judge God in a human, i.e. limited way. A second Wesleyan problem is that it cannot see the point of mission and evangelism if the saved are anyhow saved and the lost are anyhow lost. For Calvinists mission is a matter of obedience to proclaim the gospel, not a matter with salvific implications.

The report does not take a standpoint in favour of one of these approaches. Both are consistent with the three agreed affirmations. The problem is solved (better: remains unsolved) by leaving a space open for "the fundamental mystery underlying both the theological problem and the answers"⁴¹⁷. Those who stress human freedom cannot answer the question why some choose salvation and others do not without denying the very human freedom they wish to affirm. Those who emphasize God's sovereignty cannot answer the question why God elects some and does not elect others without denying his absolute freedom which they wish to affirm.

Both traditions have gone wrong when they have claimed to know too much about this mystery of God's electing grace and of human response. Therefore, that Wesley and Calvin advocated conflicting ways of holding together what they affirm in common should not constitute a barrier between our traditions⁴¹⁸.

The only concept in relation to salvation to which the report pays attention is sanctification⁴¹⁹. Sanctification is an issue which is dealt with in the chapter called 'Perfect salvation'. Both Methodists and Reformed hold in common that sanctification means a "real change"⁴²⁰ worked by God in the Spirit. God's grace restores and renews believers so that their salvation results in the perfect love of God and neighbour. "In the two traditions we are taught to strive and pray for entire sanctification"⁴²¹. The Reformed tradition with Calvin relates sanctification to God's election. God will complete the work he has started and the believer will lead his life in obedience according to God's law. The methodists preach Christian perfection which means "that we may set no limit to the present power of God to make sinners into saints"⁴²². There is no attention to the question how sanctification relates to justification. Both are understood as the one work of God. The understanding of salvation as sanctification is regarded against the background of an eschatological concept, which is best described as communion. In the chapter on sanctification it is stated that "Methodists and Reformed agree that 'man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever'... a heavenly fellowship of praise and bliss... We are saved into community"⁴²³. Therefore the church is called a covenant community, an anticipation of the eschatological community. Both Methodists and Reformed confess that their understanding of

⁴¹⁷ *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 11.

⁴¹⁸ *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 11-12.

⁴¹⁹ In the report of the first consultation it is said that "we recognize the centrality of justification by grace through faith and its essential relation to obedience to the will of God" (*Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 6), but there is no clarification why this concept is so important.

⁴²⁰ *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 13.

⁴²¹ *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 13.

⁴²² *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 13.

⁴²³ *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 13.

salvation has lead to an individualistic approach. In their understanding of the church as covenant communion they recognize that "through the conversion of the heart, one appropriates the covenant relationship with God and with other people"⁴²⁴. The sacraments are signs and seals of faithful participation in the community. The sharing of life between Methodists and Reformed is an evidence of growing participation in the communion of the Triune God on the way to the consummation of the covenant in Christ.

Conclusions

- (1) This relatively short dialogue tackles some traditional problems between the Reformed and Methodist tradition. No attention is paid to the relationship between God and salvation, which is assumed.
- (2) The same accounts to the role of Christ.
- (3) With regard to salvation it is the relationship between God's sovereignty and human free will in the appropriation of salvation which has caused problems. These problems are dealt with in a process of mutually asking questions about the respective positions. Although the report itself explains that Reformed is more than Calvin(ism), whereas Methodism is more than Arminius (Arminians) or Wesley(ans), the positions of both parties are determined by a rather *konfessionskundliche* interpretation of both traditions. E.g. predestination is as much a problem within the Reformed tradition as it is between the Reformed and other traditions. The problem of the appropriation of salvation is not solved, not only because this is difficult, but also because it is said to destroy the very terms of the problem. It seems, however, that both parties withdraw rather fast from the problem referring to God's mystery and the principle of unanswerability of these questions. Compared to e.g. the *Leuenberg Agreement (LA)* the problem of election could have been dealt with in a different and more fruitful way. The point of departure of the *LA* is God's desire that all will be saved instead of starting with the mystery of God's eternal decrees (his sovereignty) and the state of human nature. From *Leuenberg's* point of view election belongs to the field of God's call to salvation in Christ. This perspective excludes any form of double predestination, whereas *Together in God's Grace* does not comment on this issue. The fact that the problem of grace is dealt with from a rather confessional point of view, results in a lack of attention to the question what salvation actually means. The report is meant to solve a theological problem, which is dealt with in such a way that the problem itself is not solved but is understood "not (to) constitute a barrier between our traditions"⁴²⁵.
- (4) The only concept in relation to salvation to which the report pays attention is sanctification. Both Methodists and Reformed hold in common that sanctification means a "real change" worked by God in the Spirit. God's grace restores and renews believers so that their salvation results in the perfect love of God and neighbour.

⁴²⁴ *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 12.

⁴²⁵ *Reformed and Methodists in Dialogue*, 12.

Chapter 7

The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue

7.1 *The Leuenberg Agreement, 1973*

The *Leuenberg Agreement (LA)* is the result of a long process of discussions which date back to the 1950s. Since several Lutheran-Reformed dialogues in different European countries (The Netherlands, 1956; FRG⁴²⁶; France, 1959) and the USA (1966) revealed similar theological problems, the need was felt to deal with them on a larger scale. A first initiative came from the World Council's Commission on Faith and Order. Between 1955 and 1971 three series of meetings were held. During the first series (1955-1959) leading European Lutheran and Reformed theologians discussed Scripture (1956-57) and the presence of Christ (1958-59). Despite the lack of clear methodology and aim, these discussions showed that essential differences did not coincide with the confessional boundaries. The second series, the *Bad Schauenberg* conversations, took place between 1964 and 1967⁴²⁷. Again, at the instigation of Faith and Order, in co-operation with the LWF and the WARC, a series of four meetings was held by Lutheran and Reformed theologians. This resulted in three series of theses on The Word of God, The Law, and The Confessions⁴²⁸, which were submitted to 83 Lutheran, Reformed and United churches in Europe. The responses by the churches were generally positive and this resulted in an officially appointed Joint Study Committee of Lutheran and Reformed which proposed a third series of meetings (1969-1973). Its theme became Church Fellowship and Church Division. Twice, 1969 and 1970, Lutheran, Reformed and United theologians met in Leuenberg (Switzerland). The ecclesiological concern of those meetings resulted in a suggestion to formulate a theologically based and workable proposal to achieve church fellowship ('concord'). In 1971 the first official draft of such a 'concord' was revised and accepted, and submitted to the European churches⁴²⁹. Finally, in Leuenberg, 1973, the 'concord' or agreement was again revised and adopted by the 'Preparatory Assembly for the drafting of an Agreement between the Reformation Churches in Europe'. Participant churches were asked to indicate their assent in writing, so that church fellowship came into effect on October 1, 1974, between those churches that had given their assent. By now almost one hundred churches have signed the Agreement.

The *Leuenberg Agreement (LA)*⁴³⁰ consists of two parts. The first section (A) addresses the participating churches by giving a review of the process that led to the *LA* (A § 1-5) and by presenting the procedure by means of which they could give their assent and thus become part of the fellowship (A § 6-8). The second section (B) is the material agreement of the *LA*. After a short introduction (§ 1-2) on the basis of the agreement, section I ('The Road to Fellowship', B § 3-6) recalls the common heritage of the Reformation (B § 4) and what has changed since then (B § 5). In section II the 'Common Understanding of the Gospel' is articulated: the centrality of justification (B § 7-12), being imparted by word and sacraments (B § 13-15). The particular doctrinal condemnations are addressed in section III ('Accord in Respect of the

426 The Arnoldshainer Theses, 1957; Confession and Unity of the Church, Westphalia, 1959; Theses for Church communion, 1970; cf. M. Lienhard, *Lutherisch-Reformierte Kirchengemeinschaft heute: Der Leuenberger Konkordienentwurf im Kontext der bisherigen lutherisch-reformierten Dialoge*, Ökumenische Perspektiven 2, Frankfurt am Main (Lembeck/Knecht) 1972, 11-16.20-25.

427 Cf. Ehrenström/Gassmann, *Confessions in Dialogue*, 98-101. The report of these meetings, *Lutheran and Reformed Churches on the Way to Each Other*, was published in *Lutheran World* 14/3 (1967) 53-67.

428 'Lutheran-Reformed Conversations', *Lutheran World* 14/3 (1967) 53-67.

429 Lienhard, *Lutherisch-Reformierte Kirchengemeinschaft heute*, 123-132 (in German).

430 The *Leuenberg Agreement* is published in *Toward Church Fellowship*, 35-49. Cf. part one of Marc Lienhard, *Lutherisch-Reformierte Kirchengemeinschaft heute*, 9-42, where he gives an outline of the situation and developments of the national and regional Lutheran-Reformed dialogues that led to the *LA*.

Doctrinal Condemnations of the Reformation Era'): The Lord's Supper (B § 18-20); Christology (B § 21-23) and Predestination (B § 24-26), concluded by the statement that these condemnations are no longer applicable (B § 27-28). In the final section (IV, 'The Declaration and Realization of Church Fellowship') the *LA* presents itself as an instrument of unity (B § 30-34) and describes the aspects of a final fellowship for Witness and Service (B § 36), the Continuing Theological Task (B § 37-41), the Organizational Consequences (B § 42-45) and the Ecumenical Aspects (B § 46-49).

The heart of the agreement is the common understanding of the gospel. The crucial point here is the seventh article of the *CA* which holds that the right teaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments is the necessary and sufficient prerequisite for the true unity of the church (§ 2). The right teaching and administration are at the same time the minimum and sufficient condition for church fellowship. This combination of necessary and sufficient leads to a distinction between the heart (the gospel), which is essential, and the periphery, which can vary. The *LA* operates a 'minimum' approach, without going into issues that have their origins in the 'heart'⁴³¹.

Taking up the *adagium* of the *CA* as its starting-point, it is clear that to a large extent the *LA* depends on the teaching of the Reformation, in particular its confessions⁴³². The fathers of the Reformation are considered as the starting-point. Despite their common visions and despite the fact that they wanted to stand in the tradition of the whole of Christendom and the ancient creeds (§ 4), they could not avoid divisions. These divisions can be healed nowadays, as a result of the changed elements in the contemporary situation.

The agreement is not only a matter of a *common* understanding of the gospel, but also of the *right* understanding of its content. This content is understood universally and christologically. Christ is the heart of the Scriptures. "The gospel is the message of Jesus Christ, the salvation of the world, in fulfilment of the promise given to the people of the Old Covenant" (§ 7). 'Message of Christ' is meant as a genitivus objectivus, in the sense that Christ himself is the content of the message. There is no reference to the message that Christ himself proclaimed. The text jumps from the incarnation directly to Jesus Christ's death, resurrection and *parousia*:

In this message, Jesus Christ is acknowledged as the one in whom God became man and bound himself to man: as the crucified and risen one who took God's judgment upon himself and, in so doing, demonstrated God's love to sinners: and as the coming one who, as Judge and Savior, leads the world to its consummation (§ 9).

431 "Whereas former dialogues had often elaborated lengthy theses on subjects such as the Lord's Supper or the confessions of faith, there was in Leuenberg an obvious effort to concentrate on what was called in the Agreement 'the heart of the Scriptures' (§ 12) or in preparatory texts, the 'foundation'", M. Lienhard, 'The Leuenberg Agreement: Origins and Aims' in: D.F. Martensen/W.G. Rusch (ed), *The Leuenberg Agreement and Lutheran-Reformed Relationships: Evaluations by North American and European Theologians*, Augsburg (Augsburg Fortress) 1989, 20. Precisely this approach, agreement on an essential minimum from which other issues are 'only' derived, caused the Finnish Lutherans not to sign the Leuenberg Agreement. According to Huovinen, the 1977 Finnish synod "expressed the desire that the central elements of the ecumenical creeds of the early church be given the position they deserve, also in the Reformed churches", E. Huovinen, 'Safeguarding Classical Christianity: Ecumenical Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland', *ER* 48/1 (1996) 75 (see also the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue between the Finnish Lutheran and Russian Orthodox church in this chapter).

432 In the use of the confessions of the Reformation too, one can discern the distinction the *LA* makes between the heart and the periphery: the Leuenberg churches remain loyal to their confessions of faith (§ 30), and at the same time declare the condemnations expressed in those confessions to be no longer applicable (§ 32). "In the process they have learned to distinguish between the fundamental witness of the Reformation confessions of faith and their historically-conditioned thought forms" (§ 5).

The message of Christ is the message of the salvation of the world. How salvation is interpreted is explicated in the paragraph between the two christological ones (§ 7 and 9): "The true understanding of the gospel was expressed by the fathers of the Reformation in the doctrine of justification" (§ 8). Considered grammatically, this sentence simply provides historic information, however, it implies that its content is still holding. The differentiation between the gospel of Jesus Christ and its true understanding in justification is a subtle one. The gospel is not identical to justification. God's work in Christ comes first and presupposes our justification. Therefore justification is not called the *Mitte der Schrift*; "the unique mediation of Jesus Christ is the heart of the Scriptures" (§ 12). At the same time justification is the true understanding of the gospel and not merely one among others. Moreover, the heading of the first section of section II speaks of 'The Message of Justification as the Message of the Free Grace of God' and as such justification summarizes the content of the common understanding of the gospel. In other words, the gospel is a gospel of salvation which is expressed in the christologically founded message of justification. Justification is the *Gesamtinterpretation* of the salvific event in Christ. The report, however, gives no reasons why justification should function as such, except for the historic reason in § 8. In § 10 the content of the gospel as justification is elucidated. The approach is a rather existentialist one. Similar to the understanding of cross and resurrection, in which Jesus took upon himself the sinner's judgment, the appropriation of salvation (justification) is a matter of repentance and faith, and the sinners' assurance of his/her righteousness.

Through his word, God by his Holy Spirit calls all men to repent and believe, and assures the believing sinner of his righteousness in Jesus Christ. Whoever puts his trust in the gospel is justified in God's sight for the sake of Jesus Christ, and set free from the accusation of the law (§ 10).

Here the universal approach becomes clear in God's call to "all men". This relates directly to the question of predestination (§ 24-26) which is one of the three doctrines that once led to mutual condemnations (next to the Lord's Supper and Christology). The *LA* speaks of election "only with respect to the call to salvation in Christ" (§ 24) which means that salvation comes first and concerns everyone. Faith, or putting one's trust in the gospel, is the answer to God's call and implies God's unconditional acceptance of the sinner. The problem that God's offer is not accepted by all is not solved. Faith

respects the mystery of God's dealing with men. It bears witness to the seriousness of human decisions, and at the same time to the reality of God's universal purpose of salvation (§ 25)

Thus *LA* rejects the supposition of an eternal decree by which God condemns individuals or groups.

Justification is not something in itself but "for the sake of Jesus Christ". Thus, God's word assures but also calls for daily repentance and renewal, praise of God and service to others. Justification is inextricably bound up with sanctification, although this term is not mentioned. Lienhard calls this connection between justification and sanctification one of the reasons why the Reformed churches could agree with the central position justification has in the Agreement, which as such applies more to the Lutheran tradition⁴³³. In the Reformed tradition, according to him, justification as *Gesamtinterpretation* is sometimes expressed in different categories which too can express the critical and central intention of the justification article. In the report the meaning of the justification article is essential, not its wording. The final meaning of the message of justification is the message of the free grace of God which is the measure of all the

433 Lienhard, *Lutherisch-Reformierte Kirchengemeinschaft heute*, 75.

church's preaching (§ 12).

Justification as encompassing interpretation of the gospel cannot lead to quietism.

This message sets Christians free for responsible service in the world and makes them ready to suffer in this service. They know that God's will, as demand and succour, embraces the whole world. They stand up for temporal justice and peace between individuals and nations (§ 11).

Nevertheless, the service to others in the world is eschatologically conditioned. In the section on Christology Christ was already described as the coming one, "as Judge and Savior" (§ 9) who will lead "the world to its consummation" (§ 9). This theme returns in the elucidation of justification, which is not only assurance for the believing sinner of his righteousness but also assurance "that God will bring his kingdom in all its fullness" (§ 10). Finally, it concludes the 'ethical' paragraph (§ 11) which says that Christians in their service to others seek and apply rational and appropriate criteria with people of good will "in the confidence that God sustains the world and as those who are accountable to him" (§ 11)⁴³⁴.

Conclusions

- (1) (2) The mediation of Christ is described in terms of his incarnation, his crucifixion and resurrection, and his coming. The heart of this mediation is Christ's taking God's judgement upon himself and thus showing God's love to sinners. As the coming one the Christ who is judged himself becomes "Judge and Savior". This penitential framework returns again when the text pays attention to the way in which "all men" can appropriate salvation. The believing sinner is assured of his righteousness, set free from the accusation, set free for service and is accountable to God.
- (3) The message of justification as the true understanding of the gospel is elaborated without explicit reference to the church. Salvation is offered to all men, universally. The church, however, does not play a role in this offer. The only reference to the church in the section on the common understanding of the gospel is the remark that what is said is based on the ancient creeds of the church, and that the message of justification is the measure of all the church's preaching. In baptism and the Lord's supper justification is imparted to the human being and as such functions as criterion for the church's practices.
- (4) Justification is the prime concept for salvation in the *LA*. As the true understanding of the gospel of the unique mediation of Jesus Christ it is the paramount expression of the message of God's free grace. Justification is the starting-point of the *Agreement*, which means that in the text no arguments are given for its use, apart from the reference to the fathers of the Reformation. In the *LA* justification is interpreted in a broad sense. Elements of God's salvation which are 'classified' as belonging to sanctification elsewhere (e.g. Edinburgh), are part of justification in *LA*. Hence, the service to others, daily renewal, and the divine creation of new life in our present world are mentioned, but all as components of the message of justification

434 Cf. the original German text which says a little more explicitly "in Verantwortung vor seinem Gericht".

7.2 The International Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue, 1989: *Toward Church Fellowship*

The international Lutheran-Reformed dialogue resumed in 1985, following a decision by the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to pursue a theological debate in 1982. Between 1970 and 1975 there had already been an international Lutheran-Reformed dialogue⁴³⁵, however no report was published of these meetings⁴³⁶. Between 1982 and the first meeting in Geneva, 1985, it was determined how to proceed and under which mandate. In Geneva⁴³⁷ the Joint Commission reviewed the history of Lutheran-Reformed relationships and it analysed how dialogues with other traditions had influenced these relationships. In Chicago, 1986⁴³⁸, the reviews and analyses were continued and first observations toward a joint Lutheran-Reformed affirmation of faith were made. A draft statement, forerunner of the final report, was prepared in Driebergen (The Netherlands), 1987⁴³⁹. During its last meeting in Budapest, 1988⁴⁴⁰, the commission produced the final draft. The publication of the report occurred in 1989 known as *Toward Church Fellowship*⁴⁴¹. Its aim was not only to discuss theological issues but also to evaluate Lutheran-Reformed relationships around the world, in order to give theological affirmations, reports and recommendations.

The international Lutheran-Reformed dialogue is a rather short and modest dialogue compared to bilateral 'giants' like ARCIC and the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. At first sight, it seems that two church communions, stemming from the same historical and theological roots, have so much in common that an international dialogue is rather overdone. However, considering the different ways taken by the two traditions since the Reformation which resulted more or less in estrangement - mutual condemnations; the failure to declare pulpit and altar/table fellowship in many places in the world; the problem of (complete) acceptance of each other's ministries; and the lack of success in common service and witness (§ 4-7)⁴⁴² - it was by no means unnecessary to engage in dialogue. Yet, a more important reason for its modesty is the dialogue's methodology. Whereas some other dialogues have a 'top-down' approach, starting on the international level and inaugurating and influencing dialogues on lower levels, the Lutheran-Reformed dialogue is the other way round. Its starting-point is what has already been done and achieved on different national and regional levels and then to build up on this. With regard to those achievements the European *Leuenberg Agreement (LA)*, which in turn rests on a number of national dialogues in the Netherlands, FRG and France, and the North-American *An Invitation to Action*⁴⁴³ have been the most influential ones. Next to the reliance on dialogues already held, the international dialogue is supposed to respond to needs of member churches and to look at global implications, in particular from and for the so-called Third World.

The dialogue's functional rather than material approach is reflected in the structure of the report. In a sense, one could say, that the essence of the report is not *what* it says, because the

435 Cf. Ehrenström/Gassmann, *Confessions in Dialogue*, 31-33.

436 In his overview of the Lutheran-Reformed dialogue P.R. Fries calls the 1985-1989 the first world-level Lutheran-Reformed dialogue, which is in fact not true (*DEM*, 638).

437 Cf. E. Brand, 'International Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Resumes after 10 Years', *LWI-Monthly Edition* 1 [January] (1986) 3.

438 'International Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Meets near Chicago', *LWI-Monthly Edition* 1 [January] (1987) 12.

439 'LWF, WARC Sponsor Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission Meeting in Netherlands', *LWI-Monthly Edition* 2 [February] (1988) 15.

440 'Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission Assesses Local Achievements in Dialogue', *LWI-Monthly Edition* 1 [January] (1989) 16.

441 Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission, *Toward Church Fellowship: Report of the Joint Commission of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Churches*, Geneva (LWF/WARC) 1989.

442 The paragraphs refer to the report 'Toward Church Fellowship', as it is published in: Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission, *Toward Church Fellowship: Report of the Joint Commission of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Churches*, Geneva (LWF/WARC) 1989, 5-34.

443 *An Invitation to Action* is also published in *Toward Church Fellowship*, 50-72.

theological agreements it mentions have been formulated before and elsewhere, but to *whom* it speaks and for what *reason*. It repeats and elaborates already existing agreements in order to support and encourage Lutheran-Reformed relationships around the world. Therefore the theological passages are rather short. Sometimes they are simply excerpts from the *Leuenberg Agreement* or *An Invitation to Action*. The Foreword is followed by an Introduction (§ 1-16), which sums up the reasons for the estrangement (§ 4-7), and the grounds on which a better contemporary understanding rest: (1) the common understanding of the unconditional character of the free gift of grace (§ 9); (2) the need for common witness requires a fuller fellowship (§ 10); and (3) the results of the dialogues already held, which do not justify division and which confirm that the condemnations of the sixteenth century are no longer applicable to the present-day situation of the churches (§ 11). The dialogue is placed within the larger ecumenical movement (§ 14) and the positions in the report are considered to be compatible with the points of view Lutherans and Reformed have uttered in dialogues with other churches (§ 15).

The first chapter is an expression of 'Our Common Faith' (§ 17-26), followed by chapter II called 'On the Way to Church Fellowship'. In this chapter an overview is given of the present state of Lutheran-Reformed relationships: Leuenberg (§ 29-32); Union Churches in the FRG, the (now former-) GDR, and Ethiopia (§ 33-35); Churches in Dialogue in Indonesia and the USA (§ 36-48); Other Patterns of Relationships (§ 49-50). In chapter III, called 'Unity in Diversity', the church-dividing issues and mutual condemnations from the past, particularly from the 16th century, are dealt with, however not extensively. There are four sections: (1) Word and Sacrament (here the report refers to what has already been achieved in other dialogues and relies to a large extent on the formulations of the *Leuenberg Agreement*) (§ 55-62); (2) Church and Ministry (§ 63-68); (3) Witness and Service in this World (§ 69-72); and (4) Language, Ethnicity and Sectarianism (§ 73-78). The closing chapter, ch. IV, consists of a declaration of full communion and a number of recommendations grounded on the conviction that past condemnations are no longer applicable; full pulpit and altar/table fellowship can be established with the mutual recognition of each other's ministry; mutual commitment to grow in unity through new steps in church life and mission is needed (§ 80-82). The basic conviction which has led to full communion is that

both Lutheran and Reformed churches agree on those matters which are necessary and sufficient for the true unity of the church: the right preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in accordance with the word of God... Those differences in preaching and sacrament which remain among us should no longer be regarded as church-dividing (§ 83).

According to this conviction the agreement between Lutherans and Reformed is a rather elementary agreement which leaves room for a variety of forms and theologies as long as they do not oppose the right preaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments⁴⁴⁴. Hence, it is no surprise that the expression 'unity in diversity' appears in many places in the report (§ 16.24.78) and forms the core of ch. III⁴⁴⁵.

This understanding of unity of the churches (based on *CA*, VII, *RL*) makes clear that, rather than unity and diversity being opposites, diversity is a part of the richness of our unity in Christ (§ 52).

Differences, theological and ethical (§ 72), are no longer church-dividing as long as they are

444 Cf. § 26, 51 and 83. This has been the same base for the Leuenberg agreement and refers to article VII of the Augsburg Confession.

445 During the Chicago meeting it was already stated that the report "attempts to point out the positive values of diversity; the goal of the conversations is not structural or doctrinal uniformity", 'International Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Meets near Chicago', *LWI-Monthly Edition* 1 [January] (1987) 12.

borne by the deeper agreement in word and sacrament (§ 53). 'Toward Church Fellowship' bases this deeper agreement on prior studies (§ 55) and refers to them in its statement.

In 'Our Common Faith' Lutherans and Reformed give account of their faith. The approach is trinitarian, in particular emphasizing christology⁴⁴⁶. It refers to the Reformation and the (creeds of the) early church (§ 17). The world owes its existence to the grace of the triune God (*sola gratia*). His purposes have been revealed and lived out as promises in Christ, the first fruits of the kingdom which will be fulfilled by the Holy Spirit. The centre of the Scriptures, i.e. the gospel, is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for us. This *pro nobis* is the complete basis of our salvation. Christ has fulfilled the promises, reconciled us with God and one another, and made us one in his body. The trinitarian aspect of salvation is emphasized when it is said that by the Holy Spirit Christ calls us to be in union with him,

to participate in his communion with the Father, his intercessions for the world, his mission from the Father to the world and his continuing ministry of service to the needs of all humanity (§ 20).

The language of communion and participation as 'results' of our salvation is rather significant in 'Our Common Faith'. When it is stated that "we are justified by the grace of God and not by our own works" this is related to communion when it continues: "and are therefore called to communion with God and one another, not on the basis of our own achievements..." (§ 21). Salvation means our acceptance by God into his fellowship and the removal of our separation from him (§ 21).

Hence salvation is not only related to the justification aspect, namely that our salvation totally depends on God and not on our achievements, but also, maybe even primarily, on communion with God and one another. Hence, living by faith alone (*sola fide*) is not only receiving forgiveness, but also the gift of new life in Christ (§ 22). And similarly by Christ's offering we are not only accepted, but also have access to the Father by the Spirit (§ 24). This communion aspect seems to be absent in the fundamental agreement on word and sacrament in ch. IV, 'Unity in Diversity'. There it is explicitly stated that the Lutheran and Reformed traditions "confess this gospel in the language of justification by grace through faith alone" (§ 58)⁴⁴⁷. 'Our Common Faith' confirms that we are justified through the grace of God (§ 21) but it leaves open whether the doctrine of justification is the typical or eminent way to resume the gospel. It simply formulates the gospel as the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for us. Moreover, it speaks of barriers and separation between God and the human family, whereas here, in a more juridical approach, it speaks of God's judgement on human sin taken upon himself by Jesus Christ, as an act of sheer mercy (§ 56-57). Due to the fact that 'Word and Sacrament' (in ch. IV) relies on the *Leuenberg Agreement* and *An Invitation to Action* its approach is a more individual one, justification as a matter between God and the human being, whereas in 'Our Common Faith' communal aspects are more dominant. Through these communal aspects the report relates to other issues, in particular ethical ones which play a prominent role in the report. Communion with God is related to communion with one another and being accepted by God means the acceptance of one another "in costly discipleship as freely and unconditionally as God in Christ has accepted us" (§ 21). Or in the terminology of reconciliation: "In Christ we are reconciled and called to be agents of reconciliation" (§ 76). So there is a direct ethical link between communion with, reconciliation with, free acceptance by God and communion with,

446 Apart from the trinitarian notions, the role of God and the Holy Spirit, Christ is central: cf. § 17: "we are one in Christ"; § 19: "Jesus Christ is the church's one foundation"; § 23: "Jesus Christ alone is the word of God"; and § 25: "There is no area in life, indeed in all creation which does not belong to Jesus Christ..."

447 This is a literal quotation from the document *An Invitation to Action* of the Lutheran-Reformed dialogue in the USA. The quotation is on page 59, § 2 of *Toward Church Fellowship*.

reconciliation with, free acceptance of other people. *In concreto* this means that "the struggle for justice, human rights, peace and the care for creation demands of the church acceptance of a common responsibility" (§ 69). This does not mean that we all should do the same things. Consensus in word and sacrament urges Lutherans and Reformed to pay attention to what can be accepted as legitimate diversity in this communion and what cannot, both in theology and in ethics.

Our church fellowship is a community which knows and accepts variety. But that does not imply undifferentiated acceptance of any or all attitudes or opinions (§ 72).

The same accounts to what has grown up as distinctiveness in each tradition, but what does not automatically belong to the realm of doctrine or ethics. Diversity in language and ethnicity, and sectarianism have sometimes been used to obscure the gospel, whereas at the same time language and ethnic identity are part of the colourful gifts of God which should not be denied or suppressed. The report concludes by stating that

we believe that unity, diversity and harmony are all God's gift to the church. Therefore diversity must not obscure unity, nor concern for unity deny diversity. Together we serve one Lord, through whom alone we have access by the one Spirit to the Father (§ 78).

Conclusions

- (1) (4) Compared to the *LA* the trinitarian approach is more prominent in the international Lutheran-Reformed dialogue and thus other aspects of salvation play a role. Next to salvation understood as justification, reconciliation and communion, other aspects are part of salvation imparted to us in Christ. Salvation in Christ means that we are reconciled with God and one another, and called to communion with God and one another. The way in which our need for salvation is described uses the terminology of separation and 'breaking down the barriers' rather than a penitential framework.
- (2) The role of Christ, his life of healing and teaching, his death and resurrection, are not interpreted in terms of a penitential framework, but in terms of participation and communion. He opens up the way, so that we have access to the Father by the one Spirit, and thus are accepted by God into his fellowship.
- (3) Justification is not explicitly mentioned as the criterion for all the church's practices. The proclamation of the gospel, baptism, eucharist and ministry are called Christ's gifts to his one church, which compared to the formulation of the *LA* (tasks of the church) seems to give the church a more important role in the appropriation of salvation.

Chapter 8

The Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue

8.1 The Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, 1970-1986: *Dialogue Between Neighbours*

The international part of the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue officially started at the beginning of the 1980's⁴⁴⁸, and thus followed a number of national and regional dialogues of which some go back to the 1960's and 1970's⁴⁴⁹. In the seventh plenary (Sandbjerg 1993) it was decided "to discuss at future meetings the Orthodox and Lutheran understanding of salvation"⁴⁵⁰. This had already been done in a few of the regional and national dialogues⁴⁵¹, like the Finnish-Russian and the American dialogue. The

448 After some preparatory meetings between 1978 and 1980 the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission has met eight times and has published four common statements on *Divine Revelation* (1985), *Scripture and Tradition* (1987) and *The Canon and Inspiration* (1989) (published in: *Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue: Agreed Statements 1985-1989*, Geneva (LWF) 1992 [in English, German and Greek]) and on *Ecumenical Councils and Authority* (published in: 'Lutheran-Orthodox Relations: Statement of the Sandbjerg Consultation', *LWF Today* 5 (1993), 10-11. For a general introduction to and overview of the history, themes and methods of the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogues see F. von Lilienfeld, 'Die Bilateralen Dialoge zwischen Orthodoxie und "Protestantismus" seit dem Reformationsalter' in: *Les dialogues oecuméniques hier et aujourd'hui*, Les études théologiques de Chambésy 5, Chambésy-Genève (Éditions du centre Orthodoxe du patriarcat oecuménique) 1985, 97-117. She discerns three fields of subjects that have had particular attention in the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue: (1) Theology of the Trinity; (2) Ecclesiology and (3) Soteriology and Anthropology. Cf. also Th. Nikolaou, 'Der Offizielle Orthodox-Lutherische Dialog: Geschichtlicher Überblick und gemeinsame Texte', *Orthodoxes Forum* 4/1 (1990) 83-98 and, considering methods and goals, D. Daniel/D. Martensen, 'Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue' in: J.A. Burgess (ed), *Lutherans in Ecumenical Dialogue: A Reappraisal*, Augsburg (Fortress) 1990, 78-81.

449 The regional Finnish-Russian dialogue (see below); the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)-Russian dialogue; the EKD-Constantinople dialogue; the EKD-Romanian dialogue; the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic (BEK)-Russian dialogue (until 1991) and the BEK-Bulgarian dialogue; and the national dialogues in the USA (see below), Finland, Ethiopia, India and Rumania (the last is not organized by the churches themselves but by different theological institutes). Cf. K.C. Felmy, 'Die orthodox-lutherischen Gespräche in Europa' *ÖR* 29 (1980) 504-518.

450 The *Sandbjerg Statement* declares in its last section (§ 8): "Agreement on authority of the ecumenical councils requires us to discuss at future meetings the Orthodox and Lutheran understanding of salvation in light of these councils", J. Gross/Th.F. Best/L.F. Fuchs (ed), *Growth in Agreement III, International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005*, Faith and Order Paper 204, Michigan/Cambridge-Geneva (Eerdmans/WCC) 2007, 15. This intention was carried out in the Eighth (Limassol 1995) and Ninth Plenary (Sigtuna, 1998).

451 The EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany)-Russian dialogue discussed the Christian understanding of reconciliation (1967) and the relationship between the resurrected Christ and the salvation of the world (1971) published in *Versöhnung. Das deutsch-russische Gespräch über das christliche Verständnis der Versöhnung*, EKD-Studienheft 5, Witten (Luther Verlag) 1967 and *Der Auferstandene Christus und das Heil der Welt*, EKD-Studienheft 7, Witten (Luther Verlag) 1972. The EKD-Constantinople dialogue published a volume of six lectures and discussions (no agreed statement) on salvation according to the New Testament, the church fathers, the Lutheran church and on salvation and the world, published (in German) in *Christus - Das Heil der Welt: Zweites Theologisches Gespräch zwischen dem Patriarchat Konstantinopel und der EKD*, Beiheft zur Ökumenischen Rundschau 22, Stuttgart (Evang. Missionsverlag) 1972. Two EKD-Rumanian dialogues (held in 1985 and 1988) on soteriological issues were published as well: *Das Heil in Christus und die Heilung der Welt*, EKD-Studienheft 20, Hermannsburg (Missionshandlung) 1994; and *Rechtfertigung und Verherrlichung (Theosis) des Menschen durch Jesus Christus*, EKD-Studienheft 23, Hermannsburg (Missionshandlung) 1995. A short statement on justification was released in India in 1983, called 'Orthodox/Lutheran Dialogue: Agreed Statement on Justification by Faith with Special Reference to Personal and Social Righteousness' in: K.M. George/H. Hofer (ed), *A Dialogue Begins: Papers, Minutes and Agreed Statements from the Lutheran-*

origins of the dialogue between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church date back to the 1960's when the first contacts between the Lutheran and the Orthodox Church were established (1964)⁴⁵². Archbishop Simojoki of Finland and Nikodim, Metropolitan of Leningrad, met each other in 1965, and two years later the Archbishop proposed to engage in dialogue, which was approved by the Russians. Both churches agreed to start discussions in 1970 on two themes: the eucharist and themes related to the theological basis of the churches' work for peace. Hence the tradition was inaugurated to deal with a doctrinal and a socio-ethical theme at each conference. Lutherans and Orthodox met every three year, except for the second meeting that took place after one year. In between, both churches met apart for evaluation and preparation. Seven conferences were held⁴⁵³, the first in Turku (Sinappi), Finland 1970. Two lectures were delivered on the eucharist and two on peace⁴⁵⁴. The eucharist was also theme of the second meeting in Zagorsk, Sovjet Union 1971. There were four lectures on the sacrifice and presence of Christ related to the eucharist, as well as three lectures on peace and justice. At Järvenpää 1974, eucharist and ministry were discussed, without much progress. At the same meeting the Russian delegation brought up the theme of salvation. The discussion on salvation was continued at the Kiev meeting in 1977, both in its doctrinal, in particular the relationship between justification and *theosis*, as well as in its socio-ethical aspects, viz. salvation and the Kingdom of God. In Turku 1980, the salvation discussion proceeded and focused on the theme faith and love in salvation, whereas the theme of peace continued to set the socio-political agenda. At its sixth meeting, Leningrad 1983, again the eucharist was discussed, especially its relationship with ecclesiology. Furthermore the peace work of the respective churches was examined. In 1986 at Mikkeli sanctification, as an aspect of salvation, was studied, next to the Sermon on the Mount as theme in connection with peace. In 1989 the Lutherans and Orthodox met in Pyhtitsa and Leningrad, discussing the theme Creation⁴⁵⁵. At its ninth meeting in Järvenpää 1992⁴⁵⁶, the subject of the discussions was the Apostolic Faith and Teaching Today⁴⁵⁷. The theme 'peace' lost its urgency after the changes in Russia, so that since 1989 the socio-ethic topics have been related to the JPIC-process of the WCC⁴⁵⁸. In 1995 a meeting took place in Kiev. Its themes were the church's work concerning mission, peace and nationalism⁴⁵⁹. It is no surprise that the direct intent of the dialogue has not been to negotiate on the unity of the churches. In a sense it has been an open-ended dialogue in which the dialogue itself has been regarded as an significant ecumenical event. "For this reason comments have been made to the effect that the lack of an ecclesio-political goal has made the discussions 'joyful ecumenism'... The objective has been to increase mutual theological understanding... The dialogue has been understood as a process of convergence"⁴⁶⁰. Hence, in the case of soteriology the dialogue has not exhaustively reflected on salvation but it has tried to find common points between the two churches. The dialogue has not resulted in a report, in the sense of an agreed

Orthodox Dialogue in India, 1978-1982, Kottayam (CMS Press) 1983, 36-37.

452 Cf. H.T. Kamppuri (ed), *Dialogue between Neighbours: The Theological Conversations between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, 1970-1986; Communiqués and Theses*, Publications of Luther-Agricola Society B 17, Helsinki 1986, 9-11. A review (in German) from a Finnish point of view in: R. Saarinen, '25 Jahre theologische Gespräche zwischen Evangelisch-Lutherischer Kirche Finnlands und Moskauer Patriarchat', *ÖR* 44/4 (1995) 473-488.

453 Cf. Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 11-16.

454 Kamppuri gives an outline of the titles, languages and translations of all the papers read between 1970-1986; Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 22-35.

455 The results of the eight meeting in Pyhtitsa and Leningrad in 1989 are published in *Creation: the Eighth Theological Conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church, Pyhtitsa and Leningrad, June 9th-19th, 1989*, Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 3, Helsinki 1991.

456 *Järvenpää 1992: The Ninth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church*, Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 5, Helsinki 1993.

457 This theme was discussed against the background of The WCC's project Common Confession of the Apostolic Faith.

458 During the Cold War period the peace-theme was part of the agenda in particular because the Russian authorities, in particular The Council for Religious Affairs, which supervised the ecumenical relationships of the Orthodox Church, wanted so; cf. Saarinen, '25 Jahre theologische Gespräche', 474. For a more theologically oriented analysis of the peace question cf. H.-O. Kvist, 'Die Bedeutung der Friedensproblematik im Dialog zwischen der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche und der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Finnlands', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 4/1 (1991) 241-249.

459 Cf. the press communiqué 'Finnish Lutheran, Russian Orthodox discuss mission, peace: Cooperation instead of competition', *LWI* 17 (1995) 7.

460 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 17.

upon text published at the end of a series of meetings. Every meeting has produced a corpus of theses drafted by the participants and discussed and approved in plenary sessions. It is noteworthy that the original texts, in Russian and Finnish sometimes have different texts at the same places.

The theses and communiques of the Järvenpää (1974), Kiev (1977) and Turku (1980) meetings are the most important ones for our investigations since they are (partly) devoted to soteriology. In particular the Orthodox were interested in the subject of salvation, because of the developments in soteriology in the wider ecumenical movement. The missionary conference in Bangkok 1973 provided a perfect illustration of these developments with which the Orthodox struggled. Against this Bangkok background the Russians uttered their dissatisfaction with the prevailing soteriological tendencies. The Lutherans too regarded the Bangkok approach as too one-sidedly 'horizontal', without attention to the eschatological perspective. Hence, where the discussions on the eucharist and especially its relationship to the ordained ministry seemed to proceed with some difficulty, soteriology turned out to be a theme on which considerable progress would be made⁴⁶¹.

The theses of Järvenpää are divided into three series. Twelve theses are devoted to the eucharist and the priesthood, eleven to the peace-discussion and seventeen to soteriology. The soteriological theses are divided into five sections: I The creation and the fall of man (§ 1-4); II The atonement of Christ (§ 5); III Faith and sanctification (§ 6-8); IV Soteriology and eschatology (§ 9-11); V The Bangkok Conference, 1973 (§ 12-17). The first four sections present a dogmatic summary of God's work in creation, redemption, sanctification and eschaton, whereas the last section is a reaction on the developments in Bangkok.

The approach is trinitarian, the text is shaped along the line of the creeds of the early church and tells us about the *Heilsgeschichte* from creation onwards to the eschaton⁴⁶². The first thesis declares that

461 "The most important theme at the Finno-Russian discussions from the point of view of the results achieved has evidently been soteriology... This theme has formed a long and fruitful study, from the Järvenpää conference of 1974 to the Mikkeli conference of 1986", Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 19.

462 The return to the dogma's of the early church in this dialogue is not only a way to get closer to Orthodox theology, it has also, perhaps this is even more true, to do with the self-understanding of Finnish Lutheranism, as Kamppuri confirms in his introduction: "The Lutheran Reformation is understood in Finnish Lutheranism as above all an attempt to return to the dogma of the early Church. As far as we understand, it is for precisely this reason that it was easy to reach mutual understanding...", Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 21. For this conviction he refers to the Finnish-Lutheran theologian Tuomo Mannermaa (cf. Kamppuri page 20, note 9). There are other references that underline this view of Kamppuri when he quotes Juha Pihkala: "In other words, unity is firmly anchored in the trinitarian and christological dogma of the early Church", Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 14. Cf. also the article by Eero Huovinen with the telling title 'Safeguarding Classical Christianity: Ecumenical Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland', *ER* 48/1 (1996) 69-78. With regard to the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue he declares: "Not only have all the talks with the Russian Orthodox Church dealt with classical themes drawn from the Christian faith, but the method employed has also been classical, so that biblical argumentation and appeal to the traditions of the two churches - that is, the shared tradition of the undivided church - have figured prominently in the talks" (74). Precisely the lack of attention of the churches from the Reformation to the continuity with the classical tradition became the reason for the Finnish Lutherans not to sign the Leuenberg Agreement. The 1977 Finnish synod, according to Huovinen, "expressed the desire that the central elements of the ecumenical creeds of the early church be given the position they deserve, also in the Reformed churches" (Huovinen, 'Safeguarding Classical Christianity', 75). This does not mean refrainment from ecumenical involvement, but the wish "to bring our own contributions to such discussions (i.e. Leuenberg, RL). Cooperation between Christian churches depends decisively on the spiritual and theological continuity which extends all the way back to the early centuries of the Christian faith" (Huovinen, 'Safeguarding Classical Christianity', 75).

almighty God, who is One in His substance and Triune in the persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, has created the visible and the invisible world (§ 1).

Originally man (the report speaks in the male form) shared in God's life and glory, he participated in the Divine life in faith and love. Through the fall, however, he lost his share in the Divine life and fell into slavery and was subjected to condemnation. Adam's fall was the beginning of man's history of sinfulness; the corruption is unavoidably inherited. Because of his love God sent his Son into the world for the redemption of the lost human race (§ 5). Christ's obedience unto death makes many righteous and his death is a redemptive sacrifice for the world. Risen from the dead he exercises authority sitting at the right hand of the Father (§ 5). The Holy Spirit gives the human being the fruits of Christ's atonement, although this is an exclusively ecclesial event: "This takes place in the Church... Without the Church nobody can come to Christ the Lord and be saved" (§ 6). The fruits are the forgiveness of sins and the participation in the holiness of the God-man, justification and sanctification⁴⁶³ (§ 6). Faith and love, as gifts of the Spirit, are the two pillars on which salvation rests: "Man is not saved by his own deeds (Eph. 2,9), but faith is also dead, if it is not manifested in good deeds (Jam. 2,17)"⁴⁶⁴. Given the Christian struggle during his/her life⁴⁶⁵ salvation is 'only' provisional. "The full likeness of Christ and full participation in the Divine Life will not be realized, however, before the resurrection of the dead" (§ 8). Here the transition to the fourth section, soteriology and eschatology, is made, a section which already implicitly touches on the discussion with Bangkok. The ninth thesis distinguishes, with a reference to the Bible (e.g. Rom. 5,9-10) between salvation as a matter of hope and expectation, and future or final salvation.

Future salvation is the fulfilment of everything we have already experienced, because of the merit of Christ, in his Church, "for we have been saved, though only in hope" (Rom. 8,24). This can also be expressed in an other way. 'Salvation today' (the expression occurs in Lk. 19,9) is an anticipation of final and perfect salvation (§ 9).

The reference to Bangkok and its theme 'Salvation Today' is obvious in the implicit criticism of its too horizontal approach. Salvation today is related, but not the same as the final, perfect and future salvation. In § 10 and 11 however, Lutheran and Orthodox make considerable attempts to avoid the risk of an absolute separation between present and future salvation. Christian hope is the basis for what we call now: an ecological responsibility. To live in hope means "awakening to a strong sense of responsibility for protecting and developing the life of nature" (§ 10). The same accounts to social and international questions like social reforms, aspirations for racial and national liberation, and peace. However, these are not Christian salvation in themselves.

They are... actions which are man's duty on account of the salvation given to him; they are good deeds of faith, hope and love. Though perfection will be achieved only in the coming everlasting life-to come, the

463 In Mikkeli 1986, Lutherans and Orthodox would return to the theme of sanctification. Similar to the short note on participation in the holiness of the God-man, the Mikkeli summary states that "sanctification is participation in the holiness of God". Again this has the two components of, on the one hand, a constant return in repentance and penitence to the holiness of God received in baptism, and on the other, a "continuous growth in the knowledge of God's grace and of Christ, but at the same time in the knowledge of one's own sinfulness", Mikkeli, 1986, § 12, (= Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 111).

464 The Russian text reads: "The Bible exhorts us: 'God influences man's will and rouses him to work out his salvation with fear and trembling' (Phil. 2,12-13)", and the Finnish text reads: "You must work out your own salvation in fear and trembling; for it is God, who works in you, inspiring both the will and the deed, for his own purpose (Phil. 2,12-13)".

465 Here the Russian text says: "A Christian must strive throughout his life to reject sin and aim at sanctification" (§ 8); whereas the Finnish text read: "A Christian needs to have his sins forgiven every day until his death" (§ 8).

hope of the future victory of the Kingdom of God encourages Christians, the whole Church of Christ on earth, to fight and work in order to bring about, as fully as possible, a foretaste already in this life of the righteousness, peace and joy of God (§ 11).

These words are, so to speak, the preliminaries to the last section on the Bangkok conference. After a general statement on the significance of the doctrine of salvation⁴⁶⁶, Lutherans and Orthodox accept that it is God's will that people work for the liberation of the world (§ 13) and that Christians must strive to eliminate the reluctance of so many people - "even Christians", as it stated - and churches to work for social justice "in every possible way" (§ 14). Nevertheless, the report explicitly rejects the one-sidedness of the Bangkok discussions and final documents.

We cannot accept the fact that... insufficient attention was given to the salvation of man through the Gospel of Christ and to man's moral perfection... (§ 15). The Bangkok conference has been considered a celebration of salvation. We think, however, that a real celebration of salvation takes place when man has been reconciled with God and his neighbours in Jesus Christ, and especially, when the Church triumphantly celebrates the Eucharist... (§ 16). The unique mission of the Church, while striving for unity, is to proclaim the message of salvation among all nations in order that all men should believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. This principle must also be observed in the ecumenical movement (§ 17).

Lutherans and Orthodox notice that in Bangkok insufficiently attention was paid to what they regard as fundamental for Christian salvation - salvation is given through the Gospel of Christ, or salvation is reconciliation with God and neighbours in Jesus Christ (earlier called forgiveness and participation in the divine life, mentioned as the two 'results' of Christ's atonement). Therefore they regard the church's mission primarily as the proclamation of Christ and salvation through him.

Although the attention to salvation at the Järvenpää meeting was evoked by the Bangkok conference and the (lack of) relationship between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' understanding of salvation, another theme emerged too that would determine the next meetings in Kiev, Turku and Mikkeli: the relationship between the Orthodox view of salvation as divine life and the Lutheran view as justification. At Järvenpää the Orthodox presented their concept of *theosis*, and this encouraged the Finnish delegation to search for a possible Lutheran equivalent⁴⁶⁷, which was found in the expression '*in ipsa fide Christus adest*'⁴⁶⁸. The expression is not literally incorporated in the theses, but the notion is present:

Whoever truly believes in the Gospel and receives the sacraments of faith is given by God a share in the Divine Life. Through faith Christ dwells in his heart (Eph. 3,17)(§ 6)⁴⁶⁹.

In Kiev the discussion on justification and *theosis* continued, now as an explicit theme. In five sections⁴⁷⁰, I-III prepared by the Lutherans and IV by the Orthodox, both partners in dialogue realized that their mutual understanding of salvation does not exclude one or the other. Lutherans admitted that the predominant opinion had to be changed because "it has become evident that both these important aspects of salvation... have a strong New Testament basis and

466 "The doctrine of salvation is the essence of the Gospel of Christ, because Jesus Christ is the foundation of his Church and the life and activity of every Christian" (§ 12).

467 It is interesting that in the Järvenpää theses justification as *terminus technicus* does not occur (except for a citation from Chrysostom). Of course the idea of justification is not absent, but it is interesting that the Lutherans first of all tried to understand the view of *theosis* in Lutheran terminology.

468 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 13.

469 Cf. also the sentence in § 6 in the Russian version (Orthodox) that "the Gospel proclaims to unworthy sinners... that they participate in his holiness when they repent and turn to Christ (Mk. 1,15)" Instead of 'turn to Christ' the Finnish (Lutheran) text reads 'believe the Gospel'.

470 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 73-76.

there is great unanimity with regard to them both" (§ I,1), whereas Orthodox noticed a "remarkable unanimity on the essence of justification and deification" (§ IV, introduction).

The Lutheran approach is christological and rather objective: "According to our common faith our Saviour Lord Jesus Christ is the initiator and fulfiller of our salvation" (§ II,1). His death and resurrection have destroyed sin, damnation and death. Thus he brought about reconciliation and justification. Ascended into heaven

He is the King in whom nature has been deified, i.e. promoted to divine life. Wherever man through faith participates in Christ and in His Church there sin, damnation and death no longer rule over him. Thus Christ is the basis of our justification and deification" (§ II,4.5.6).

The means through which we become participants in justification and deification are the Word of God, the Sacraments and the Divine Service (§ III,1.2). Through them we invite Christ to live in us. Baptism means justification, which is liberation from the power of sin, death and devil, and the beginning of deification, which is participation in divine life. Hence justification and deification are parts of the same process and complement each other. However, at the same time the *simul iustus ac peccator* remains in a sense, whereas repentance of sin and fulfilment of God's commandments are an essential part of deification (§ III,4). The eucharist is given "to preserve the fruit of rebirth in us" (§ III,5). In his "real body and blood, we receive Him in our hearts by faith and love. In that we inwardly and outwardly participate in His divine nature" (§ III,6). Thus justification and deification are revealed to us.

The Orthodox accentuate the subjective, personal appropriation of salvation. Their starting-point is the universality of salvation through Christ. Everyone is called by God to become partaker in the eternal kingdom of heaven, as salvation is called. Similar to the Lutheran understanding baptism means (next to adoption and new creation) justification, interpreted as pardon and remission of sins (§ IV,3). Whereas the Lutherans, however, bring up the belief of ongoing repentance, the Orthodox emphasize the process-aspect of the new road of the justified to deification, "a process of growing holiness or coming closer and closer to God" (§ IV,4). Here they mention the influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit in faith, hope and love in the process of deification, whereas Lutherans do not mention the Holy Spirit at all. Part of this process of deification are the good deeds, fruits of a living faith. Whereas Lutherans emphasize the need for ongoing repentance as part of deification, the Orthodox accentuate the possibility of recognizing God's will or of rejecting it.

Grace never does violence to a man's personal will, but exerts its influence through it and with it. Everyone has the opportunity to refuse consent to God's will or, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to consent to it (§ IV,7).

Moreover, the Orthodox explicitly add as Orthodox opinion that "what has been said above presupposes cooperation between God's saving grace and man, i.e. freedom of will" (§ IV,7).

The distinction we have made between what Orthodox and what Lutherans assert is not a distinction in the summary itself. Both Lutherans and Orthodox agree with the entire text. The differences in approach are regarded as complementary, rather than opposite. Aspects of justification and *theosis* have more similarities than was expected. In particular the attention paid to the theology of Luther, rather than to Lutheran theology, has given the Finnish Lutherans the opportunity to 'discover' that Luther's understanding of justification contains the idea of deification. "Justification and deification are based on the real presence of Christ in the word of

God, in the sacraments, and in worship"⁴⁷¹.

The Kiev summary aroused some discussion. First of all the partners in dialogue were aware of the fact that some problems needed further investigation, such as the relation between faith, hope and love; the Christian hope of personal salvation; the meaning of 'faith'; the relationship between Law and Gospel; and the relationship between God's grace and the freedom of will. In particular the last point provoked some discussion, within the Lutheran communion because the last point of section four (§ IV,7) very much tended towards an active participation of the human in the progress of his/her salvation. Whether this could be called synergism or *synergeia* was discussed⁴⁷². From the Finnish point of view § IV,7 concerns co-operation between God and the already justified person. "The co-operation between God the Holy Spirit and the regenerated person..., *synergeia*, is clearly expounded in the Lutheran tradition. Thus, it is not a question of something newly-discovered"⁴⁷³.

The socio-ethical part of the Kiev meeting also paid attention to salvation, in particular its relationship to the kingdom of peace⁴⁷⁴. In a way it continues the Bangkok discussion, trying to keep a distinction between the two kingdoms the Christian lives in, without separating them.

The concepts of salvation and the Christian's social responsibility belong closely together. As a citizen of two kingdoms - the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of Heaven - the Christian has been called to strive for the kingdom of Heaven and to be at the same time an active builder of a just kingdom of the

471 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 19. Due to the increasing number of ecumenical contacts a renaissance of Luther-research developed in Finland, however with different viewpoints from that in German or American Lutheranism. In particular the work of the Finnish scholar Tuomo Mannermaa contributed to this Finnish approach to Luther and Lutheranism. Mannermaa distinguishes sharply between the theology of Luther, to whom he ascribes far more concern for the motif of Christ's presence (*Gegenwart-Christi-Motiv*) than generally has been assumed, and later 'Lutheran' developments, in particular in the *Formula Concordiae* and Melancton, who has, much more than Luther, emphasized the forensic justification, apart from God's or Christ's inhabitation (185). Luther does not separate between the work and person of Christ, but the real presence of Christ, person and work, in faith is in itself righteousness of faith (*Glaubensgerechtigkeit*). From Melancton and onwards the presence of Christ has been separated from justification by faith and faith has only been regarded as reception/acceptance of forgiveness through Christ's merit. As a consequence, Lutheran theology developed a reservation about or rejection of objectified, substantial metaphysics (*objektivierte, substanzhafte Metaphysik*) - in other words: the real-ontic presence of Christ - because the doctrine of justification could not be based on a metaphysical world, but in the work of God for us in history witnessed through Christ (*Transzendente Wirkungsdenken*) (183). Ulrich Asendorf, however, concludes that Mannermaa's sharp distinction between Luther and Melancton/Lutheranism is much too absolute. For Luther, as well as for the Reformation in general, justifying faith comes first. It has absolute primacy over the *Gegenwart-Christi-motiv* and the *fröhliche Wechsel*, which must be regarded as "superb examples for a profound and consistent understanding of justification" (187). U. Asendorf, 'Rechtfertigung und Vergottung als Thema in Luthers Theologie und als Brücke zur Orthodoxie: Ein Beitrag über die Bedeutung der gegenwärtigen finnischen Lutherforschung', *ÖR* 41 (1992) 173-189. Cf. also T. Mannermaa, *Der im Glauben Gegenwärtige Christus - Rechtfertigung und Vergottung: Zum ökumenischen Dialog* in: *Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums* 8 (new series), Hannover (Lutherisches Verlagshaus) 1989; R. Saarinen (1989) *Gottes Wirken auf uns: Die transzendente Deutung des Gegenwart-Christi-Motives in der Lutherforschung*, Stuttgart (Franz Steiner) 1989; S. Peura/A. Raunio (ed), *Luther und Theosis: Vergöttung als Thema der abendländischen Theologie*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola Gesellschaft A 25, Helsinki/Erlangen 1990; R. Meßner, 'Rechtfertigung und Vergöttlichung - und die Kirche: Zur ökumenischen Bedeutung neuerer Tendenzen in der Lutherforschung', *Zeitschrift für Kirche und Theologie* 118 (1996) 23-35; and an overview of the Finnish contribution to the Luther-research in K. Zwanepol, 'Luther en Theosis', *Luther Bulletin* 2 (1993) 48-73.

472 Kamppuri refers to an article of K.C. Felmy, not published at that time, in which he expressed his suspicion that the Finnish party had accepted synergism. In 1980 this article was published as: K.C. Felmy, 'Die orthodox-lutherischen Gespräche in Europa' *ÖR* 29 (1980) 504-518, where he says: "Damit haben die luthereischen Partner zweifellos Anliegen des orthodoxen Synergismus aufgenommen" (514).

473 J. Pihkala in an unpublished, Finnish written paper, quoted by Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 15.

474 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 77-80.

world (§ I,1).

The Christian's social responsibility has a two-fold basis. First, being created and under the protection of God, the Father, Christians are called to act responsibly. Secondly, in the salvation by Christ, forces of its ultimate goal, the kingdom of God, are already at work in this age. Christians are called to aim at advancing the kingdom. Similar to the Järvenpää theses Lutheran and Orthodox want to emphasize both the eschatological dimension of salvation and the inspiration it gives for today's work⁴⁷⁵. The church has a different role to play. Its basic task is to lead people into salvation, however its social responsibility is not alien to its nature, "it comes from the essence of its message and character" (§ II,1). *In concreto* this means that the church enlightens, stimulates and influences Christians (§ II,2) and inspires, promotes and supports the following of principles of peace and justice (§ II,3). In other words, the church itself refrains from participating in social work and leaves it to the individual Christian.

In Turku 1980 the theme faith and love was discussed and presented in ten theses⁴⁷⁶. In Kiev it had become clear that with regard to the relation between God, the human being and salvation, Lutherans are inclined to put the accent on faith, while Orthodox do so on love. The Turku theses establish the unity of faith and love in Christ, "the initiator of faith and the source of love towards God and our neighbours" (§ 1). Whereas Orthodox are concerned that in the Lutheran tradition faith is merely an intellectual assent to the truth of Christian doctrine, both Orthodox and Lutherans hold that faith means participation in the divine life. "Mere belief in the truth of Christian doctrine does not yet constitute saving faith and does not lead to good works (James 2,17-26)⁴⁷⁷. Saving faith is a life in personal communion with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit (Gal. 2,20; 5,25" (§ 3). In addition Lutherans declare that "Lutherans particularly stress faith as trust in God and His promises" (§ 3). The relationship between faith and love is that faith gives birth to works of love. God grants us salvation far beyond our understanding and therefore it is impossible for it to be earned through good works. Therefore good works are always fruits of faith, as faith working through love yields good works as its fruits. Again the Lutherans make a Lutheran statement whereas they explicitly declare that there is a distinction between deeds "with which we attempt to earn salvation... and deeds which are a result of faith" (§ 5). This remark indirectly refers to the criticism of synergism and *synergeia* that arose after the publication of the Kiev summary. Faith and love as gifts belong together and cannot be separated. Therefore love plays a role in salvation as decisive as faith does.

Man's love of God is his response to the love of God towards men (1 Joh. 4,19) and it manifests itself in faithfulness to God, in professing one's faith and in love for one's neighbours (1 Joh. 4,7-10) (§ 6).

The gift of love is essential to the process of the human being attaining sanctification, although he/she will never be perfect and will be in need of repentance and forgiveness. Eschatologically spoken, "everybody will be judged according to how faith has become manifest in works of love... mercy will be granted to sinful man for Christ's sake, and man will become a partaker of the life of the world to come" (§ 10).

475 In the section on The Christian's responsibility for peace it is said: "The work for peace is inspired by the hope of the coming kingdom of peace because final and complete eschatological peace will be created by the Lord" (§ III,3).

476 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 86-89.

477 Cf. Järvenpää, 1974, § III,7 (Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 65).

Conclusions

- (1) (2) To a large extent this agreement is situated in christology. Against the background of a trinitarian framework, the predominant factor for salvation is Christ. "Christ is the basis of our justification and deification"⁴⁷⁸. For the Orthodox the role of the Holy Spirit is important, in particular in the process of deification. The Lutherans do not mention the Holy Spirit at all.

Two characteristics of Finnish Lutheranism have significantly contributed to the agreement of the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church. Without downplaying the Orthodox contribution to the dialogue, one must say that, firstly, the role of classical Christianity in Finnish Lutheranism (the Reformation primarily understood as an attempt to return to the dogma of the early Church) and, secondly, its distinctive approach in researching Luther and Lutheranism have resulted in a great unanimity between Lutherans and Orthodox on the understanding of salvation as justification and *theosis*.

- (3) The quintessence of the consensus between the Russian Orthodox and the Finnish Lutherans is the conviction that salvation, especially justification, is not only imputation of grace by a gracious God through faith, but also the real (*real-ontisch*) presence of Christ in the believer. This understanding of justification made it possible for Lutherans and Orthodox to relate it to *theosis*, so that both aspects of soteriology could be seen as complementary rather than completely different or contrary. The absolute differentiation between justification and *theosis* is suspended, and both become part of the same provisional process which is completed in the eschaton. Justification itself already means that the believer participates in Christ; it is not only the end of a sinful life, as is expressed by the concept of forgiveness, but at the same time the beginning of a process of *theosis*, or sanctification⁴⁷⁹. "The traditional Lutheran doctrine of justification contains the idea of deification of man"⁴⁸⁰. With regard to the role of the church the Bangkok discussion still plays a role. Although it is only explicitly at stake during the Järvenpää 1974 meeting, it still resounds in the dialogues which followed. In particular the emphasis on eschatology, considered as future, final and perfect salvation, is regarded to be a corrective to the 'one-sidedness' of Bangkok and the ecumenical movement in general. The question whether this holds true or not is not to be answered here, but it has urged this Lutheran-Orthodox discussion to reflect on the meaning of salvation. First of all, the report distinguishes between a typically Christian understanding of salvation and human actions for social reforms, racial and national liberation, a just peace (in other words: Bangkok's emphasis). Those works are not Christian salvation in themselves, but foretastes of and derived from salvation through Christ which will finally be perfected and which is described in a variety of images⁴⁸¹. Secondly, following from this distinction the role of the church is primarily seen in relationship to a typically Christian perspective on salvation, not only that the basic task of the Church is to lead people to salvation, but also that there is no salvation outside the

478 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 86.

479 In the reports there is hardly any difference between *theosis* and sanctification. Deification is called "a process of growing holiness or coming closer and closer to God" (Kiev § IV,4),

480 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 19.

481 Full participation in the Divine Life, full likeness of Christ (Järvenpää § III,8); fulfilment of everything we have experienced; the wedding supper of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem (Järvenpää § III,9); perfection in the everlasting life to come; the victory of the Kingdom of God (Järvenpää § III,11); man's moral perfection (Järvenpää § III,15; see also the paragraphs of Kiev 1977 on Salvation and the Kingdom of Peace.

church⁴⁸².

- (4) In the theses justification is mainly used in its material sense, its meaning. Because justification has an equal position to *theosis* it is not regarded as *Inbegriff* for salvation nor is it given a criteriological function to judge all proclamation and practices of the church (its meta-dogmatic or meta-theological function). The ontological approach of Finnish Lutheranism could have thrown a different light on this particular issue of justification as criterion. However, in the theses of Leningrad 1983 on the Nature of the Church⁴⁸³ justification and *theosis* do not play a role at all.

8.2 The Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue in North America, 1992: *Christ in Us and Christ for Us*

The first round of dialogue between Lutherans and Orthodox in North America started in 1965 and took place in two sessions, 1967 and 1969⁴⁸⁴. The second round began in New York in 1983. At its first session Lutherans and Orthodox discussed the nature and meaning of the seven Councils of the early church. At its second meeting (1985) creeds and confessions and the *filioque* were under consideration. Moreover it was decided to concentrate on the issue of salvation, which eventually became the theme of the following sessions. This resulted in an Agreed Statement, *Christ in Us and Christ for Us*, which was published in 1992⁴⁸⁵. The dialogue is sponsored by the Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The membership of the Commission consisted of eleven Orthodox (not all of them took part in the whole series of the second round) and nine Lutherans. A second round took place between 1994 and 1998. It resulted in the report *A Lutheran – Orthodox Common Statement on Faith in the Holy Trinity*⁴⁸⁶.

The report *Christ in Us and Christ for Us* consists of an Introduction and seven chapters on *Theosis*, Redemption and Triumph over Death, The Image of God, Nature and Grace, Free Will, The Spiritual Life, The Communion of Saints. Important to note is that "the central focus has not been so much on the 'how' of salvation as on the 'content' of salvation"⁴⁸⁷. Thus the discussion is about what we mean by salvation and not about the way we appropriate salvation. At the outset it is stated that the difficulties between Orthodox and Lutherans do not relate to the understanding of the principle dogmas of the early church, but to "the mystery of salvation and the particulars of the spiritual life"⁴⁸⁸. The report is meant to present some of the difficulties, convergences and agreements in the field of salvation by commenting on some of the key-words of Christian soteriology. A main obstacle has been the differences in understanding the same terms and phrases, e.g. the concepts of free will, image of God, *theosis* and justification/sanctification. Justification (and sanctification) and *theosis* are the main interpretations of salvation.

482 "Without the Church nobody can come to Christ the Lord and be saved" (Järvenpää, salvation theses § 6).

483 Kamppuri, *Dialogue between Neighbours*, 98-100.

484 Cf. J. Meyendorff/R. Tobias (ed), *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue*, Minneapolis (Augsburg Fortress) 1992, 10-12. This volume contains an Introduction, the Common Statement *Christ in Us and Christ for Us* and a number of supporting papers by some of the dialogue members.

485 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 15-33.

486 <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Bilateral-Conversations/Lutheran-Orthodox/Statement-on-Faith-Holy-Trinity.aspx>

487 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 14.

488 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 18.

The report starts by outlining the Orthodox view on salvation, followed by the Lutheran view. At the same time the report describes possibilities for agreement and convergence. The *locus classicus* for *theosis*, although it is not a biblical term, is 2 Pet. 1,3-4: we may become participants of the divine nature. This does not mean that human beings become God as part of God's *ousia*, his being, but they enter into a personal relationship, a direct union with God's divine energies, the communicable attributes of God.

Salvation is understood to mean 'participation' or 'sharing' or 'fellowship' with God, or 'indwelling' in the words of the gospel of John⁴⁸⁹.

The understanding of salvation preferred by the Lutherans is characterized by the juridical and penitential language of vicarious atonement, imputation and forensic justification.

Justification is that act by which God removes the sentence of condemnation on human beings, releases them from guilt, and ascribes to them the merit of Christ. Lutherans have more often spoken of Christ 'for us' than they have of Christ 'in us'.

Although the language of union and communion is not absent in the Lutheran tradition, in particular not in sermons and devotional literature⁴⁹⁰, in general *theosis* is employed among Orthodox, and not among Lutherans or any other Western tradition. Nevertheless the idea of *theosis* is not foreign to Scripture and so it appears sometimes in Lutheran writings, "but not with the same centrality and degree of consistency"⁴⁹¹. Central to the Lutheran understanding of salvation is God's gracious declaration of forgiveness, without cooperation, through faith. According to the Finnish Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue the understanding of faith plays a similar role in Lutheran theology as *theosis* in the Orthodox theology: "Faith is a way of speaking about union between the believer and God, about fellowship with God"⁴⁹². Hence both Lutherans and Orthodox affirm that the ultimate goal of salvation is communion with God made possible through Christ's vicarious death and resurrection. "Salvation is a gracious act by which God draws sinners into a loving relationship with himself"⁴⁹³.

A similar approach is applied to the understanding of Jesus' atoning death. Orthodox can speak about the vicarious death of Christ *pro nobis*, like the early church used more than one image to express the mystery of salvation. They insist, however, that the juridical image of redemption is completed by the physical image of the triumph over death. They feel uncomfortable with the idea of Jesus' death as satisfaction for sins and substitution for deprived humanity. Nevertheless, the assessment of these differences depends on the weight one gives to a certain interpretation of atonement. It is more a matter of accentuating certain passages in the Scriptures than a matter of excluding concepts.

The third issue is the different use of the biblical phrase 'image of God'. Orthodox consider the image of God the "great natural prerogative" of human beings, which refers to the specific human characteristics of free will and rationality⁴⁹⁴. At the fall this image was tarnished, but not effaced or lost, so that in human growth in the likeness of God the image of God reflects the divine life and love. What we actually lost in the fall is God's likeness, communion with him,

489 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 20.

490 Cf. S. Peura, 'Der Vergöttlichungsgedanke in Luthers theologie 1518-1519' in: T. Mannermaa/A. Ghiselli/S. Peura (ed), *Thesaurus Lutheri: Auf der Suche nach neuen Paradigmen der Luther-Forschung*, Helsinki (Suomalainen teologinen kirjallisuusseura) 1987, 171-184.

491 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 23.

492 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 23.

493 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 24.

494 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 26.

and Christ restores our fellowship with God. Lutherans tend to regard the image of God as lost or effaced in the fall. This does not mean that human beings are totally deprived of e.g. basic knowledge of right and wrong, or rationality, or even some sense of God's existence through natural knowledge. It is not a matter of natural prerogatives but of righteousness and true holiness. Therefore they interpret the image of God in a christological sense, because in Christ the image, which was lost at the fall, is regained. Hence it depends on the definition of the image of God whether we lost it or whether it is part of our nature, and whether Christ restored our image of God or whether he restored our likeness of God. Neither view excludes the other and both Lutheran and Orthodox hold that what is regained in Christ "is more wonderful than what was lost"⁴⁹⁵.

A similar pattern of differences of accentuation returns in the chapter on nature and grace (although grace is not mentioned). Lutherans stress the sinfulness of humanity, sometimes even by speaking of being sinful by nature. This must be understood metaphorically because, what God has created cannot be sinful by nature at the same time. "Even after the Fall our nature remains a creation of God"⁴⁹⁶. Orthodox do not speak of sinfulness by nature but of sin as fallenness, being out of communion with God, in terms of morality and distorted priorities.

The differences of accent in the understanding of nature, sin and the image of God return in the chapter on free will. Although both parties

do not wish to minimize our differences on this matter... it may be helpful to observe on this question, as on others, that the way the two traditions have appropriated the Scriptures has shaped the way that they have understood the mystery of salvation and sanctification⁴⁹⁷.

The different emphases can be traced back to different biblical metaphors, and in the case of free will, but also, in general, in the case of salvation, "it is apparent that different historical experiences and different memories have shaped Lutheran and Orthodox views"⁴⁹⁸. The Orthodox view on free will is shaped by the early church where free will was an important issue in the debates with pagan philosophers. Without freedom of the will human involvement in history is merely determined and there is no human responsibility. This does not mean that humans can save themselves by their own efforts - hence the repudiation of the Pelagian error - but free will means the possibility to partake in God.

No one has a 'natural power' to earn salvation, yet God allows humans to cooperate with grace to embark on the path toward fellowship with God (*theosis*). Fellowship with God does not mean participation in the divine essence (*ousi*) but in the divine attributes or qualities (energies) that God shares with human beings⁴⁹⁹.

Precisely the language of allowance and possibility is problematic in Lutheran thinking because if human beings have the possibility this does not bring salvation but uncertainty and a striving for good works. Therefore Luther wrote that "after the fall of Adam, free will is a mere expression; whenever it acts in character, it commits mortal sin"⁵⁰⁰. So in the Lutheran understanding of salvation the initial act of salvation (justification) excludes all human involvement even if it is a God given possibility or allowance. Indeed, in sanctification humans are entirely involved, but it is distinctive from justification. Orthodox regard salvation as one

495 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 27.

496 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 28, quotation from Formula of Concord.

497 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 30.

498 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 29.

499 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 29.

500 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 29.

continuous process.

For the Lutherans 'justification' and 'sanctification' are two distinct categories, one designating God's declaration of righteousness, the other the gradual process of growth in the Christian life... The Orthodox believe that 'justification' initiates a change in human beings and begins the process of growth in Christian life... they see 'justification' and 'sanctification' as one divine action⁵⁰¹.

Within the Scriptures these two interpretations of salvation are held together⁵⁰². Theological, historical, anthropological and other circumstances have determined the ways in which emphasis was/is laid on which interpretations.

In 'the Spiritual Life' Lutherans and Orthodox pay attention to the nature of holy life, sanctification. The main question is in what sense grace changes human beings and to what degree. Lutherans are reluctant in speaking about a real improvement of the justified individual. The concept of *simul iustus et peccator* prevents them from being too optimistic about growth in perfection and divine-human cooperation and their Pelagian overtones. Orthodox are puzzled by the understanding of *gratia extra nos*.

If grace is only outside us and does not bring about a change in the life of the believer, justification can become a fiction that does not touch the substance of life and experience⁵⁰³.

Despite the Orthodox emphasis on holy life and human cooperation as the work of the Holy Spirit which must be actively received, and the Lutheran emphasis on sanctification as a real change through the faith 'in us', there remain differences in the view on holy life. Nevertheless there is agreement that

only through the gospel, the life of prayer and worship, and participation in the sacraments can the faithful enjoy fellowship with God and be empowered to become 'like him'⁵⁰⁴.

This is not an individualistic event but always takes place in the unity of the body of Christ, the communion of saints, the living and the dead.

Conclusions

- (1) The report deals with the meaning of salvation (as *theosis* and justification) and does hardly pay any attention to the way it is appropriated. Of course, the report contains sentences such as the following: "Justification is that act by which God removes the sentence of condemnation on human beings, releases them from guilt, and ascribes to them the merit of Christ" or: "Salvation is a gracious act by which God draws sinners into a loving relationship with himself", but they are not commented nor are they discussed. One should notice that the report is not an agreement in the sense that a particular problem, in particular salvation, is solved. It is an exchange of different views and a critical questioning of those views. Lutherans and Orthodox have a different understanding of the content of salvation due to a different history. They agree that both views can claim to be based on the Scriptures. In this sense their differences are differences of accent and not essential differences. They show that in the understanding

501 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 19.

502 R. Saarinen, *Faith and Holiness: Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue 1959-1994*, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1997, 172.

503 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 31.

504 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 32.

of salvation the Scripture is the *norma normans*, however, the broadness of the Scriptures (and the early church) themselves is reflected in the broadness of our contemporary understanding, depending on our circumstances. "Put much too simply, Lutheran emphasize Galatians and Romans, Orthodox emphasize the gospel of John and First John"⁵⁰⁵.

- (2) The different views on the content of salvation are related to the different views of Jesus' death. If salvation is something *extra nos pro nobis* then Jesus' death is likely to be interpreted as substitution, whereas salvation is understood as 'in us' Jesus' death is likely to be explained by the physical image of the triumph over death. Although the resurrection does not play a role in the report it is clear that the Orthodox view lays more emphasis on the unity of cross and resurrection as triumph over death.
- (3) (4) Justification is only used in terms of its content. Similar to the Finnish-Russian dialogue there are no references to the particular place justification holds in the Lutheran tradition and theology, e.g. as the centre of the gospel and as criterion of the church's teachings and practices. Of course, the fact that Lutherans bring in justification as an item for discussion shows the weight justification has in their tradition, however, the dialogue itself is limited to the meaning of justification (and *theosis*) and their (im)possible complementarity or overlap. In the report there is no attempt to relate salvation as justification and *theosis* to their actual meaning for the believer, the church or the world. In general, the method of discussion is rather oriented according to the confession and is very much an exchange of views. Views which, on further consideration, do not have to exclude each other, but refer to different approaches and developments in the respective traditions.

505 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 25.

Chapter 9

The Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue, 1976: *The Dublin Report*

The roots of the international dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council (WMC) go back to the days of the Second Vatican Council. A group of "... sixteen exceptionally qualified observers..."⁵⁰⁶ represented the WMC at all sessions of the council. In 1965 the WMC invited the Roman Catholic Church to form a joint Working Group. In 1966 this resulted in a meeting at Ariccia⁵⁰⁷. This meeting can be considered as the starting-point of an extensive dialogue, which includes five completed series until now. Each series covered a five-year period in which the 'Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council' met four times. Each series was concluded by a report, presented to the Vatican and the quinquennial gatherings of the WMC. The *Denver Report* (1971)⁵⁰⁸ concluded the first series; the *Dublin Report* (1976)⁵⁰⁹ the second series; the *Honolulu Report* (1981)⁵¹⁰ the third series; the *Nairobi Report* (1986)⁵¹¹ the fourth series; and the *Singapore Report* (1991)⁵¹² the fifth series. In 1991 a sixth series was inaugurated which, according to the general secretary of the WMC, "will review the elements of the first five statements and present 'a major recapitulation'"⁵¹³. The report was published in 1996⁵¹⁴.

With regard to the purpose and the themes of the dialogue a certain development is noticeable during this twenty-five-year-old series of discussion. Although the first report talked about a "final prospect, if not of full organic unity, at least of sharing at Holy Communion..."⁵¹⁵, the primary aim of the first three series was predominantly to trace areas of agreement and disagreement. A shift took place when the *Nairobi Report* gave account of a much clearer stated intention⁵¹⁶. "In obedience to Him who will bring about this unity we are committed to a vision that includes the goal of full communion in faith, mission

506 'Relations with the World Methodist Council (WMC)', *ISer* 1 (1967) 8.

507 'The Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council', *ISer* 3 (1967) 6-7.

508 'Report of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, 1967-1970', *ISer* 21/3 (1973) 22-38; Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 308-339.

509 'Report of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, 1972-1975', *ISer* 34/2 (1977) 8-20; Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 340-366. The English edition of the *Dublin Report* was given the title *Growth in Understanding*, London 1976.

510 'Report of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, Third Series, 1977-1981', *ISer* 46/2 (1981) 84-96; Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 367-387.

511 'Towards a Statement on the Church: Report of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, Fourth Series, 1982-1986', *ISer* 62/4 (1986) 206-216. The same in *OiC* 22/3 (1986) 241-259.

512 'The Apostolic Tradition: Report of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, 1986-1991', Gross/Meyer/Rusch, *Growth in Agreement II*, 597-617. The same in: 'Roman Catholic-Methodist Dialogue', *CI* 3/3 (1992) 106-120; and in: 'Report of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and World Methodist Council: 'The Apostolic Tradition' (Fifth Series, 1986-1991), *OiC* 28/1 (1992) 49-73.

513 '25 Years of Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue', *CI* 3/3 (1992) 121. At its first meeting in Vienna in 1992, the sixteen member commission "sought to identify as clearly as possible the achievements of the previous phases with a view to building on them and consolidating and furthering the convergences already established", 'Methodist-Catholic International Dialogue, Vienna, October 25-31, 1992', *ISer* 83/2 (1993) 89.

514 *The Word of Life: A Statement on Revelation and Faith*, Gross/Meyer/Rusch, *Growth in Agreement II*, 618-648. It discusses how God's revelation bears fruit in the faith, mission and sacramental life of the church's communion.

515 *Denver Report*, § 14.

516 This intention was expressed for the first time in the Milan working-paper [*OiC* 20/1 (1984) 82-90, § 12-13]. Obviously visible unity has been "the *unspoken* goal of the dialogue since it started in 1967; but the earlier stages were devoted to more general growth in understanding and it is only now that we have reached a stage at which both sides can state this so *explicitly*", 'Catholic/Methodist Relations', *ISer* 56/4 (1984) 107.

and sacramental life"... "Such communion, ..., must be expressed visibly"⁵¹⁷. As the purpose of the dialogue began more and more to focus on (visible) unity, the themes of the dialogue started to reflect a somewhat similar development. From a wide range of topics in the first two series⁵¹⁸, the attention changed to a more limited but intensified concentration on the Holy Spirit (*Honolulu Report*), ecclesiology, viz. church as 'koinonia' (*Nairobi Report*), and again ecclesiology, viz. the apostolic tradition (*Singapore Report*). Parallel to the goal of unity the theme of ecclesiology developed⁵¹⁹.

The *Dublin Report* (1976) contains a substantial section about salvation⁵²⁰. By the time the Second Series started there were only a few weeks to go before the WCC's CWME Conference on *Salvation Today* would be held in Bangkok. The theme of common witness and evangelism was in the air, also nurtured by the preparations of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Synod which resulted in the encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. The Commission decided to appropriate the theme 'Common Witness and Salvation Today'. This resulted in a series of reports prepared for the meeting in Reuti (1973)⁵²¹, and position papers for Venice (1974)⁵²².

It is interesting that the report pays hardly any attention to the way salvation is realized. The theme is not under discussion here. Indeed there are some expressions like "God's saving work in Christ" (§ 11a, d)⁵²³. Once salvation is explicitly related to the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (§ 15). However, in general the fact of salvation is presupposed. This holds for the appropriation of salvation as well. There is no attention to the question how salvation in Christ relates to human beings and the discussion of the Reformation and later on between Roman Catholics and Protestants is absent. According to its attention to witness and joint action, the report mainly focuses on the understanding of salvation for the contemporary world in need of salvation, because

all over the world people are growing up in communities that have not heard, or who have heard and no longer listen, or who follow other voices that speak of salvation (§ 21).

Unity is needed for the benefit of this witness because it

can be fully effective only when the churches witness together, not out of expediency or for practical convenience but for the sake of the truth being proclaimed and lived (§ 11b).

To a large extent the section on 'salvation' is devoted to a new, or rather, broader view of

517 *Nairobi Report*, respectively § 20 and 21; repeated and affirmed in the 'Preface' of the recent *Singapore Report*.

518 Areas of mission and evangelism (common witness and salvation today), social concern, moral and ecclesiastical discipline (Christian home and family, inter-church marriage), spirituality, eucharist and ministry, and authority. Cf. also G.H. Tavad, 'The Dialogue between Methodists and Catholics', *OiC* 30/2 (1994) 176-183.

519 "In the second period the international dialogue between Methodists and Roman Catholics wishes to serve the Church of Christ by contributing to the general rapprochement between Protestants and Catholics that is, hopefully in the making. To this end the participants select broad yet pointed problems to which they bring whatever lights they can draw from a common reflection on the Methodist and Catholic experience", Tavad, 'The Dialogue between Methodists and Catholics', 177.

520 Chapter II of the *Dublin Report* (§ 6-25).

521 Mainly reflections on Bangkok (cf. *Dublin Report* § 9 and note 3, Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 342 and 365).

522 Cf. note 4 of the *Dublin Report*.

523 Cf. also "God's salvific will, manifest in the reality of Christ's saving work" (§ 12); God's "initiative of love in Christ" (§ 19); God's grace (§ 19); "the teaching of Jesus Christ, God's saving work made manifest" (§ 20); "the saving grace of God in Christ" (§ 21). N.B. in the section *The Eucharist* (§ 47-74) there are some references to the once-and-for-all character of Christ's sacrifice and its benefits for the whole world (§ 52b, 63, 65).

salvation, especially its relation to the present situation of the world⁵²⁴. Analysis of the contemporary situation of today's world gives rise to a different interpretation of salvation. The basic feature of this analysis is the anthropological notion that there is a general "longing for salvation which is as wide as humanity" (§ 16). For the Christian understanding of salvation this implies, first of all, that salvation does not only have a negative intention (salvation 'from' something) - although there certainly is one - but also a positive one (salvation 'for' something).

Common usage of the word 'salvation' implies that the existence of somebody or something is threatened, that there is a menace from which somebody or something is being saved. In theological terms this menace was long summed up in the phrase 'the wrath to come', but in mature Christian thought this 'negative' was inseparable from a positive vision of what God's salvific will, manifest in the reality of Christ's saving work, meant for man... (§ 12).

The traditional eschatological form of 'salvation from' is said to have faded in contemporary consciousness. Nevertheless, the conditions of contemporary life have brought back on the agenda a more up-to-date interpretation of 'salvation from'. The report distinguishes three levels of concern for salvation, without regarding them separately:

(1) the elemental level, "... deliverance from the day-to-day threat of failure of the means of survival" (§ 13);

(2) the higher level, "... deliverance from the wretchedness of mere substance and entry into a fuller human life - work for the unemployed, learning for the illiterate, dignity and power for the despised and downtrodden" (§ 13);

(3) the highest level, "... deliverance from those anxieties, that discontent and even despair to which material comfort offers no answer" (§ 13).

In the Judeo-Christian message the ultimate concern is with the last of these levels. The Old Testament shows that salvation is related to "concrete experiences, dangers, afflictions, deprivations, injustices" (§ 14) but finally it means salvation for the kingdom, the peace of God according to the prophets.

Secondly, the shared concern for sanctifying aspects of salvation has sometimes led to understand regeneration merely as the rebirth of the individual. Although the value of a personal spirituality is highly esteemed, it is necessary to take into account

the fullest implications of the biblical view of salvation as new creation so that sanctification will be seen to include the fulfilment of God's purpose to the whole created order and we shall hear the call to witness together to the responsibility of mankind for the earth which is God's good creation (22).

Hence, salvation has both individual and social dimensions which belong together (§ 11c). Nevertheless, it must always be remembered that salvation as social concern is also a fruit of faith. Therefore - and here the report gets very practical⁵²⁵ - it must be tested whether it is the work of the Holy Spirit according to the teaching of Jesus Christ, "God's saving work made manifest" (§ 20). The means employed to achieve goals like liberation, could imply the use of

524 The *Denver Report* already paid ample attention to the question of Christianity and the contemporary world. Papers were read on issues like 'secularization' and trends in spirituality. Concerns were uttered about the secular world which lacks a vision concerning ultimate reality. Seven areas of agreement which might serve as aids to joint efforts to encounter the contemporary world are mentioned: (1) authority of Christ; (2) the Bible; (3) a theistic world-view; (4) search for a diagnosis of the human situation (identity, meaning of life, modern human's despair); (5) dignity and humanity; (6) responsibility; and (7) Christian spirituality.

525 Cf. also the other practical subjects of the report: chapter iii on Christian Home and Family: Interchurch Marriages (§ 35-43); chapter iv on Moral Questions- Euthanasia (§ 44-46).

force, "but the *spirit* of faction and violence remains alien to the Christian's concern for the poor and the oppressed" (§ 20)

Thirdly, related to the understanding of salvation beyond mere personal and spiritual categories is the need for an interpretation beyond the traditional *Jenseits* categories, which very often implied a rejection of matter and an escape from the world. This does not mean that salvation is simply restricted to *Diesseitigkeit*, on the contrary it embraces every human need while transcending it, so that eternal life "encompasses yet goes beyond our mortal condition" (§ 15).

In the fourth place it is held that God's saving work is not restricted to Christians "but extends to non-Christian communities and the whole created order" (11d). This affirmation of salvation *extra ecclesiam* summons Christians to be sensitive to the riches of other living faiths and "the possibilities of a *preparatio evangelica* in the searchings and aspirations of our contemporaries, while recognising the essential ambiguity of many social, cultural and ideological movements" (§ 23). Despite the work of God outside Christianity the aim of Christians is still to help people towards a living faith in Christ within their own society. It is the church's task to re-interpret the gospel of salvation, not only in terms of mere translation but of "the many ways in which people now hope and seek for salvation" (§ 11e).

Further it is important to note that the human longing for salvation does not imply the negation of sin. Sin is a reality and the affirmation of this sober realism is more relevant than ever, against a "naive Pelagianism and Promethean humanism, but also without overstressing the trivial" (§ 18). Sin is understood in anthropological terms as the "total picture of human injustice, venality, selfishness" (§ 18).

The conceptual understanding of salvation is outlined in a variety of terms. There is no exclusive term used to describe salvation 'from' and salvation 'for'. Since the report is related to the theme of *Salvation Today* of the Bangkok mission assembly it is clear that it does not emphasize the eschatological and individual effect of salvation. They are, however, certainly not out of sight and not separated from a contemporary understanding. Regarding the individual it is stated that salvation includes both individual and social components involving a relationship to God and to fellow-humans (§ 11c), and transformation in the living Christ of both the person and the society (§ 11c, 12). The eschatological aspect of salvation (described e.g. as the kingdom, the peace of God) is not subsumed in its contemporary understanding. Our contemporary transformation in Christ has begun in baptism and kindles a hope of eternal transformation for those who held to Christ (§ 12). "The Christian message of salvation... affirms eternal life which encompasses yet goes beyond our mortal condition". The understanding of contemporary salvation is described by both practical and more abstract terminology: salvation as an entry into a fuller human life, i.e. work for the unemployed, teaching the illiterate, dignity and power for the despised and downtrodden" (§ 13b), deliverance from anxieties, liberation (§ 19.20), sanctification (§ 22), new creation (§ 22), nourishment (§ 19), love as both God's grace and our concern (§ 19), union with Christ (§ 19).

Conclusions

- (1) (2) (3) The attention to salvation in the *Dublin Report* is determined by the context of mission and common witness in which the dialogue between Roman Catholics and Methodists took place: "we clearly see the search for unity as integral to the whole witness to Christ" (§ 119). Against the background of the Missionary Conference in

Bangkok 1972 on *Salvation Today* the report focuses on the content of the salvific proclamation, a 'material' approach to salvation which Christians proclaim. There is no attention to the question whether there is salvation and how it is realized, not in its objective sense (salvation through Christ), nor in its subjective sense (appropriation of salvation). Compared to other bilateral dialogues this is noteworthy as they sometimes pay attention to the way salvation is realized through Christ and very often are involved in the problems concerning the appropriation of salvation.

- (4) The attention to salvation for contemporary times is at the heart of the report. An analysis of our present-day situation, - its ethical and ideological problems; secularization etc. - is the starting-point of the report. Without analysing the human need there can be no appropriate witness. The anthropological approach of the report is in line with this. The grace of God "needs to be proclaimed, as answering in truth to all needs of man" (§ 19). Salvation, and therefore sin, are explicitly related to human need for salvation. This need is related to the reality of sin, however, apart from the understanding of sin in moral terms like injustice, famine, oppression, there is also a need for salvation which is related to the suffering of humanity in existential distress. "Man's glory is a 'divine discontent' which distances these needs (the primary needs, RL) by a sense of the transcendent" (§ 13c). Christian salvation is an answer to the unanswered questions of humanity. The anthropological approach results in a variety of concepts to denote salvation. Liberation, transformation and sanctification are the most dominant ones without claiming an exclusive position among the others.

Chapter 10

Salvation in Ecumenical Dialogues 1970-2000

*If ... a lot of traditional soteriological language fails to 'touch down' in people's experience today and to address their deepest concerns, then we have a serious problem of religious understanding*⁵²⁶

10.1 Salvation in ecumenical dialogues: An Overview

In this chapter we will bring together the results of the analyses we made in the previous chapters. In order to put the results in a broader perspective, we will relate them to other dialogues that have taken place in the same period. In this way we will outline a comprehensive view of the way bilateral ecumenical dialogues have been dealing with soteriology over the three decades between 1970 and 2000.

As the preceding analysis of eight ecumenical dialogues shows, salvation as an explicit theme in ecumenical dialogues is primarily confined to dialogues between churches of the western tradition. Due to developing contacts and dialogues with churches of the eastern tradition, salvation has become a theme in those dialogues as well, although the theme as such has usually been proposed by the western churches.

Different concepts denoting salvation play a role in the dialogues we have analysed. In the multilateral dialogue in Edinburgh, 1937, one discerns:

Faith and Order

The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ: justification and sanctification.

In the bilateral dialogues the following concepts are found:

Lutheran-Roman Catholic

Malta Report: The Gospel and the Church: justification, freedom and reconciliation

Justification by Faith, USA: justification

Church and Justification: justification

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification: justification

Anglican-Roman Catholic

Salvation and the Church: justification; sanctification; freedom; communion

Reformed-Roman Catholic

Towards a Common Understanding of the Church: reconciliation; justification; liberation

Evangelical-Roman Catholic

Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission: justification, deliverance

526 P. Sherry, *Images of Redemption: Art, Literature and Salvation*, London/NY (T&T Clark) 2003, 22.

Methodist-Reformed

Together in God's Grace: grace

Lutheran-Reformed

Leuenberg Agreement: justification

Toward Church Fellowship: justification and communion

Lutheran-Orthodox

Dialogue between Neighbours: justification; theosis; sanctification

Christ in Us and Christ for Us: justification; theosis; sanctification

Methodist-Roman Catholic

Dublin Report: liberation; transformation; sanctification

A quick glance shows that salvation understood as justification is the leading concept in the investigated dialogues. Other concepts, less frequently used, are sanctification, reconciliation, deliverance, freedom/liberation, communion, transformation and *theosis*. The presence of justification in relation to other concepts is perceived in different ways in these dialogues. Some dialogues dealing with justification hold that there is a legitimate pluralism in the way salvation is understood and conceptualized. In the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, the Anglican-Roman Catholic, the Evangelical-Roman Catholic this is explicitly expressed. In other dialogues this pluralism is not explicitly articulated, but the variety of concepts used in the report sometimes presupposes this plurality. Dialogues, like the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue, consist of an encounter between two confessionally related concepts. Here, the question about pluralism of concepts and its legitimacy is not asked.

The reason for the explicit expression of pluralism in some dialogues and the absence of it in other dialogues is connected with the different intentions of the respective dialogues. Dialogues that make no explicit reference to a pluralism of soteriological concepts are not involved in questions about the place of certain soteriological concepts (i.c. justification) among others. Thus Edinburgh speaks about justification and sanctification against the background of the issue of grace⁵²⁷. The Reformed-Roman Catholic *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* speaks about justification, reconciliation and liberation from the point of view of ecclesiology. The Lutheran-Orthodox dialogues discuss the meaning and comparability of justification and *theosis*, presupposing the importance that both concepts are given in their respective traditions, without, however, questioning those positions. Methodists and Roman Catholics speak about the issue of salvation today. Methodists and Reformed discuss the particular issue of predestination and free will. Finally, in the agreements between Lutherans and Reformed, in particular in the *Leuenberg Agreement* but also in the North American dialogue (*Marburg*

527 Something similar we see in the 1984 Lutheran-Methodist dialogue *The Church: Community of Grace*. Against the background of the topic The Gospel of Grace the report deals with justification and sanctification without any reference to the place of those concepts in the whole of the soteriological field. There are some other concepts used, but not in the sense of a possible pluralism in terminology. Chapter two on 'Salvation by Grace through Faith' (§ 23-27) starts by directly stating that "we agree that... justification is the work of God in Christ and comes through faith alone" (§ 23). By way of explanation Lutherans regard justification, "at once and constantly" (§ 24), as forgiveness, righteousness and eternal life, whereas Methodists see justification as the "foundation for full redemption in Christ" (§ 24); cf. *Final Report of the Joint Commission Between the Lutheran World Federation and the World Methodist Council, 1979-1984: The Church: Community of Grace*, Geneva-Lake Junaluska (WCC/WMC) 1984.

Revisited, 1966⁵²⁸; *An Invitation to Action*, 1983⁵²⁹), the principal place of justification is presupposed and as such not under discussion in the report⁵³⁰.

Dialogues in which the pluralism of soteriological concepts is explicitly mentioned, are generally those dialogues in which the Roman Catholic Church is in dialogue with churches belonging to the Protestant tradition and which often deal with the place of justification in church and theology⁵³¹. So we see attention to pluralism in the *Malta Report*, in *Justification by Faith* and in the *Joint Declaration between Lutherans and Roman Catholics*, and we come across the issue of pluralism in *Salvation and the Church* between Anglicans and Roman Catholics, and in the *Evangelical Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (ERCDOM)* between

528 There are, however, some nuances. Noteworthy is the affirmation of the North-American Lutheran-Reformed report *Marburg Revisited* from 1966: "The churches of the Reformation confessed this gospel (*i.e.* "the saving act of God in Jesus Christ" in the section before, RL) by means of the biblical concept of justification by grace through faith alone. The Scriptures also present the same gospel in other concepts, such as reconciliation, regeneration, and redemption. An evangelical confession accordingly may be, and has been, framed in terms of one or more of these", P.C. Empie/J.C. McCord, *Marburg Revisited: A Re-examination of Lutheran and Reformed Traditions*, Minneapolis (Augsburg) 1966, 37; also published in: 'Marburg Revisited: Lutheran-Reformed Consultation Series, 1962-1966' in: J.E. Andrews/J.A. Burgess (ed), *An Invitation to Action: A Study of Ministry, Sacraments, and Recognition*, The Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue Series 3 (1981-1983), Philadelphia (Fortress) 1984, 41. Later on it is stated that "the doctrine of justification by faith is fundamental in both traditions. We recognize, however, that for Lutherans this doctrine has played a more formative role in the articulation of theology. This difference is due in part to the historical situation in which Luther and Calvin did their theological work", (*Marburg Revisited* in: Andrews/Burgess (ed), *An Invitation to Action*, 44.

529 Andrews/Burgess, *An Invitation to Action*, 1984; also published in: *Toward Church Fellowship*, 50-72.

530 The fact that on the one hand in the *Leuenberg Agreement* and *An Invitation to Action* justification plays an important role and on the other hand in *Marburg Revisited* and the European *Bad Schauenburg Meetings* (1964-1967) justification is mentioned only briefly has less to do with different views on the interpretation of justification, but is related to the different purposes of the documents. The latter were concerned with theological controversies, and because justification was not considered to be one of those controversies, there was no need to mention it. The *Leuenberg Agreement* and, to a lesser extent, *An Invitation to Action*, however, were (are) meant to establish ecclesial communion and therefore justification as the basic principle for this communion constituted the heart of the reports. Cf. also H. Meyer, 'The Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Dialogue with Other Churches', *OiC* 17/2 (1981) 88-89. A similar development is recognizable in the Anglican-Lutheran dialogue. In the earlier dialogues, the international dialogue that resulted in the *Pullach Report*, 1970-1972, and the first phase of the Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue in the USA, 1969-1972 did not pay attention to justification as a theme that needed to be discussed, because it was not regarded as a controversial issue between the two churches. Later on, when the Anglican-Lutheran dialogue reached the point at which the realization of church union was discussed the doctrine of justification was dealt with in several Anglican-Lutheran documents; not as a (former) point of controversy, but as part and parcel of the common faith of both churches. (cf. for example the American 'Joint Statement on Justification' in: *Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue: Second Series 1976-1980, Report and Recommendations*, Cincinnati (Forward Movement Publications) 1981, 22-24; § 17-21 from the chapter on 'Agreements and Convergences' of the European *Helsinki Report* [= *Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue: The Report of the European Regional Commission, Helsinki 1982*, London (SPCK) 1983]; § 66 in chapter III, 'The Truths We Share' of the international *Niagara Report: Report of the Anglican-Lutheran Consultation on Episcopate, Niagara Falls, September 1987*, London (Church House Publishing) 1988; and § 32c of the chapter 'What We Agree in Faith' of the (northern) European *Porvoo Statement*, which consists of a mixture of citations from the *Helsinki Report*, the *Meissen Agreement*, the Lutheran-Roman Catholic statement *All Under One Christ* and the Anglican-Roman Catholic statement *Salvation and the Church* (= *The Porvoo Common Statement: Text Agreed at the Fourth Plenary Meeting, Held at Järvenpää, Finland, 9-13 October 1992*, London (The Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England) 1993). Nevertheless it must be said that the emphasis on the importance of justification is to a large extent a Lutheran claim. Already in the Personal Notes added to the *Pullach Report* it was the Lutheran chairman Hultgren who asked for a more substantial expression of the importance of justification, not his Anglican colleague. Moreover, in the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue *Salvation and the Church* justification is said to play "a less crucial role" (§ 2) in the English reformation and it never played such an important role as in Lutheranism. Finally, it is interesting that, contrary to the *Leuenberg Agreement*, in the Anglican-Lutheran dialogues there are no explicit references to the place of justification in church and theology, nor to its criteriological function.

Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. In the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue the attention given to pluralism is related to the question about the place of justification in the understanding of the Christian message of salvation. The Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue similarly refers to conceptual pluralism in soteriology but deals differently with this observation. The Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue speaks about a plurality of concepts denoting salvation in relation to its missiological outlook. *ERCDOM* as such is not interested in the issue concerning the place of justification in church and theology. Evangelicals declare their preference for justification among other concepts, but this is not explained and the subject is not under discussion⁵³².

With regard to the Lutherans in ecumenical dialogue it is clear that for them the relationship between justification and pluralism of concepts is the most pregnant issue. The Lutheran self-understanding is so closely connected to justification that almost all dialogues involving Lutherans pay attention to justification⁵³³. As the *Joint Declaration* states in its opening phrase:

The doctrine of justification was of central importance for the Lutheran Reformation in the sixteenth century (§ 1)... For the Lutheran tradition, the doctrine of justification has retained its special status. Consequently it has also occupied an important place in the official Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue from the beginning (§ 2).

This occurs, however, in different ways. Meyer and Gassmann distinguish between three levels on which justification is discussed: the level of meaning, the level of position and the level of application⁵³⁴. The Lutheran-Orthodox dialogues in Finland/Russia and the USA mainly operate on the first level. The western dialogues deal with questions on all three levels, although questions on the meaning of justification are not considered any more as obstacles in a growing convergence. Most significant in this respect is the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in which the material agreement (level one) on justification was reached at a very early stage of discussion. At the 1937 Edinburgh conference - no German Lutherans participated there, only American and Scandinavian Lutherans; nor did Roman Catholics participate, but Anglicans, Old Catholics and Reformed Catholics did - a far-reaching agreement on justification and

531 Cf. Meyer/Gassmann, *Rechtfertigung im ökumenischen Dialog*.

532 One discovers a similar viewpoint in the Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue, which is also concerned with evangelism, except for the non-explained Evangelical preference for justification in *ERCDOM*. The report *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World* presents a brief catalogue of biblical metaphors which describe the effect of Christ's work "such as justification (*Gal* 2,16; *Rom* 3,26-28; 5,18), salvation (*2 Cor* 7,10; *Rom* 1,16; 10,10; 13,11), expiation and redemption (*Rom* 3,24-25; 8,32) and reconciliation (*2 Cor* 5,18-20; *Rom* 5,10-11). These expressions point to the objective event wherein God has begun the restoration of a fallen humanity to a relationship with himself and has inaugurated a renewal of creation through Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. The offer of salvation from God in Christ is received in faith which is a gift of God..." (§ 10 in: 'Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World: A Report on the Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversations, 1984-1988', *ISer* 72/1 (1990) 5-14). No preference is given to any of these metaphors.

533 "Die zentrale theologische Stellung, die - aus Lutherischer Sicht - der Rechtfertigungslehre zukommt, bringt es notwendigerweise mit sich, daß sie im ökumenischen Dialog auch in der *Art und Weise* ihrer Behandlung eine Sonderstellung einnimmt", Meyer/Gassmann, *Rechtfertigung im ökumenischen Dialog*, 11. Cf. also, for example, the personal note by the Lutheran chairman Gunnar Hultgren in the Anglican-Lutheran international dialogue (*Pullach Report*, 1972). He makes the characteristic statement that "although the present conversations affirm the importance of justification and forgiveness of sins, future conversations should say more clearly and fully that the gospel proclaims the unmerited grace, whereby God declares man righteous through faith in Jesus Christ" (p.33). He describes the model used, justification, as "the doctrine of the gospel" (p.33) and "the only necessary condition to full church fellowship is agreement on the truth of the gospel (CA VII)", 'Anglican-Lutheran International Conversations 1970-1972 (*Pullach Report*)' in: Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 32.

534 Cf. chapter 2.2.

sanctification already appeared to be achievable. Of course, this agreement aroused criticism from the Lutheran and Roman Catholic side and turned out to be rather premature. In a way, however, it anticipated later agreements between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. An important subject in the Edinburgh text is the question about the appropriation of salvation: What is the relationship between God and the human being when it comes to salvation? The basic view that salvation is both a gift of God *and* renewal of the human being is expressed in the idea of complementarity of justification and sanctification as two aspects of the one divine act of grace. At the same time human freedom requires that the human being has to respond actively to God's grace. Although the relationship between gift and response is not elucidated in Edinburgh, it turned out to be a first step towards later agreements. The *Malta Report* became the first official ecumenical breakthrough in which the growing consensus in the interpretation of justification was noticed. The heart of the agreement is the mutual acknowledgement of the relativity of all theological ways of thinking and speaking with regard to the centre of the gospel, God's saving act in Christ. This opens up the possibility for Lutherans and Roman Catholics of reflecting on their own and their partner's confessional position in understanding justification, without putting the centre of the gospel as such at risk. This results in a consensus, in rough sketches, in which both parties recognize their opponents' criticisms as part of their own tradition. The real question in the *Malta Report*, however, is not the question of the meaning of justification, but of its theological importance, as possible centre and criterion of all theology.

This question has turned out to be the major theme in the ongoing international and regional Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues. The question of the meaning of the gospel of salvation or the relevance of justification as concept to interpret salvation has not been brought up again in later Lutheran-Roman Catholic discussions. Freedom and reconciliation as suitable concepts for the understanding of God's eschatological act of salvation in relationship to the world, present in the *Malta Report*, have only been isolated attempts to reflect on the actual content of salvation in Christ.

The discussion on the importance of justification 'continued' in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the USA, *Justification by Faith*. *Malta* had raised the question already, but from the Lutheran side different reactions arose. Meyer explains that the question of the theological importance was not only asked but also answered in the *Malta Report*. Both Lutherans and Roman Catholics agree on the understanding of justification as an expression of the totality of the event of salvation and as a criterion to judge the preaching and teaching of the church. Therefore the problem of the theological importance is substantially agreed upon, although perhaps not completely solved.

However, we must be careful not to set all the debated problems too one-sidedly in terms of the question of justification. Quite apart from the danger of reaching only a sterile schematism, even some sort of theological game, it should not be forgotten that we are talking about a specifically Lutheran perspective on the problem, and that this should not be imposed on the Catholic partner - not simply out of esteem and friendship, but in the last analysis because of the New Testament witness and the Christian message, which we do not treat fairly if we always and everywhere try to interpret and proclaim them as the witness and message of justification⁵³⁵.

Birmelé, however, - arguing from a more confessional, i.e. Lutheran, position - asserted that Lutherans had agreed on an understanding of justification as a possible 'centre' next to other possibilities, instead of holding on to the unquestioned place of justification in Lutheranism. He therefore questioned the Lutheran position in the *Malta Report* to regard justification as an

535 Meyer, 'The Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Dialogue with Other Churches', 116; cf. also Meyer/Gassmann, *Rechtfertigung im ökumenischen Dialog*, 61-64.

important expression for understanding salvation, nevertheless an expression among others⁵³⁶. This position could relativize the theological importance of justification (level of position) and thus its role as permanent criterion for ecclesiology (level of application). According to Birmelé, precisely this is the Roman Catholic position: justification as a central issue without being *the* centre of its theology⁵³⁷. This position leaves room for a role of the church in the appropriation of salvation which finally reveals the fundamental difference that hinders a possible unity between the two churches. Birmelé discerns a similar vagueness in *Justification by Faith* in which the importance of justification was discussed. According to him, the agreement is far-reaching, but not comprehensive, because the questions that remain open are not specified⁵³⁸. Nevertheless, the USA dialogue, *Justification by Faith*, differs from the *Malta Report* in the sense that it pays attention to the question of the importance of justification much more thoroughly than *Malta* does. The central affirmation which is agreed upon by Lutherans and Roman Catholics expresses the conviction that reliance for salvation should be placed entirely on God. God's gift of salvation is unconditional. This affirmation is accepted as criterion for all the church's teachings and practices. Again justification is regarded as one of the primary concepts used to express this central concern, however, the concern is not grasped exclusively by one particular form of expression. The application of the criterion is accepted by both parties, but the question remains which teachings and practices could pass the test, or better, which teachings and practices could function according to the intention of the unconditionality of God's grace.

Eventually, these questions led to one of the largest reports in the bilateral history, *Church and Justification*, in fact, a renewed dealing with the themes of the *Malta Report* in an intensified and concentrated way. The respective titles 'The Gospel and the Church' and 'Church and Justification', indicate the shift from the wider perspective, understanding the gospel as justification (among other possibilities) as criterion, to the narrower one, understanding justification as criterion and its ecclesiological implications. The way the report deals with justification "is not primarily a matter of how the saving event can be rightly described and how God communicates his righteousness to the sinner" (§ 167) because this has no immediate critical implications for ecclesiology. Hence, the attention the *Malta Report* pays to questions on the relationship between gospel and world and the relevance of the gospel in terms of freedom and reconciliation is reduced considerably.

In *Church and Justification* the relationship between soteriology and ecclesiology is at stake. Like *Justification by Faith* had already concluded, all difficulties and controversies between the Roman Catholic church and the Lutheran churches remain within the category of questions on the degree of dependency on and service to the gospel of salvation, in other words on the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation. The result of *Church and Justification* is that, instead of absolutizing the one or the other point of view, it speaks about Roman Catholic and Lutheran tendencies with reference to the instrumentality of the church that remain within the common conviction that the church is both recipient and mediator of salvation. Thus, the remaining differences are not church-dividing any more, because they merely exist against the background of a more profound consensus. The differentiated consensus on the doctrine of

536 "Agreed by the Lutheran participants, justification was considered as a possible centre, next to other ones", Birmelé, *Le salut*, 108.

537 "There is agreement on giving prime importance to salvation in Jesus Christ, but the catholic church does not make it the only centre of its life and theology. This happened in the process of the *Malta Report*..., the same problem was pointed at by the dialogue in the United-States where the catholic partners, however, go further in defining a central criterion", Birmelé, *Le salut*, 123.

538 Birmelé, *Le salut*, 111.

justification has proved itself ecclesiological in a differentiated way⁵³⁹. The *Joint Declaration*, again, takes up the questions that played a role during the whole of the dialogue period, questions on all three levels: meaning, position and application. The real breakthrough it represents is on the second level, its position as criterion. Although considerable work has been done on the level of application, particularly in *Church and Justification*, and despite the conclusion reached by Meyer, the *Joint Declaration* does not refer to its content stating in its last paragraph that the consensus must prove itself, which was literally one of the first phrases of *Church and Justification*. This shows how Meyer's conclusion is not shared by all Lutherans and Roman Catholics⁵⁴⁰.

The other important dialogue that pays attention to the relationship between church and justification is the dialogue of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. Its starting-point differs from the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in that the close connection between Lutheranism and justification that determined the latter dialogue so heavily is absent in the Anglican tradition. The title *Salvation and the Church* already reveals the wider perspective of the document. Although justification plays an important role in the document, it is regarded as an element of the Christian way of speaking of salvation and not as its single criterion. The confessional binding is absent and so is the Lutheran struggle to find a *via media* between loyalty to the confession and openness to other options. ARCIC's real reason for discussing salvation is the conviction that agreement on salvation is a necessary condition for further unity between the churches. That so much attention is paid to the issue of justification has to a certain extent historical reasons, since justification has generally been regarded as a major obstacle between the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. The dialogue concludes, like the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, that this is not the case any more and so declares the agreement on the understanding of justification (first level). Contrary to the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue the agreement is not the starting-point of a specific concentration on the criteriological function of justification in relation to ecclesiology, but, in a way, the end of the dealing with the subject of justification. Its criteriological role is not mentioned nor its application in ecclesiology. Nevertheless, the question about the relationship between church and salvation is not absent (see the section 'Salvation and the Church'). On the contrary, the Anglican question whether Roman Catholic teaching and practice has interpreted the mediatorial role of the church in such a way as to detract from the place of Christ as sole mediator between God and the human being (*Salvation and the Church* § 7) is not far from the Lutheran question whether the Catholic understanding of the church "does not obscure the gospel as the doctrine of justification explicates it" (*Church and Justification* § 166). The Roman Catholic question whether Anglicans abandon or at least devalue the church's ministry and sacraments (*Salvation and the Church* § 7) is similar to Roman Catholics asking Lutherans whether their understanding of justification does not "diminish the reality of the church" (*Church and Justification* § 166). Yet justification does not play a role at all in the ecclesiological section of *Salvation and the Church*. The fundamental difference between the two dialogues (*Church and Justification* and *Salvation and the Church*), in our opinion, is that in the former justification as criterion principally has to problematize the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation and this is applied in various fields of ecclesiology, whereas in the latter the relativizing of justification makes for a more fluid relationship between salvation and

539 H. Meyer, 'Kirche und Rechtfertigung', 72. Meyer refers to the consensus on justification as a *differenzierte Konsensus* which means that two different doctrines of justification correspond with each other, without being the same. Similarly the consensus on the ecclesiological implications is *differenziert*. Cf. also H. Meyer, 'Ecumenical Consensus: Our Quest for and Emerging Structures of Consensus', *Gregorianum* 77/2 (1996) 213-225.

540 Cf. Birmelé, *La communion ecclésiale*, 96.

the church possible and an application of a criterion superfluous⁵⁴¹. Hence, *Salvation and the Church* can speak of the church as sacrament of God's saving work, whereas in *Church and Justification* the use of the term sacrament for the church is part of the discussion (*Church and Justification* § 134). In *Salvation and the Church* the starting-point is that salvation is embedded in the church, whereas in *Church and Justification* the question is precisely whether salvation (as justification) is more embedded in or external to the church.

What we see is that the crux of the discussion between Lutherans and Roman Catholics and between Anglicans and Roman Catholics centres on the question how salvation is appropriated and what role the church plays in this appropriation. These questions on the appropriation of salvation also play a major role in dialogues in which plurality itself is not at stake. In the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* this mainly applies to the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation. In a christologically oriented common confession of faith Reformed and Roman Catholics characterize justification as the principal term to describe how the appropriation of our reconciliation in Christ is described: justification, implying that our salvation is entirely dependent on grace, accepted and received in faith, which in turn leads to the gift of sanctification, is accepted by both partners in dialogue. The interpretation of justification remains on the first level of meaning, without questioning its place as centre and criterion of the church. There is, nevertheless, an important relationship between justification and the church. Whereas in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue (*Church and Justification*) this relationship tends to be regarded as an external one (in particular on the Lutheran side), so that justification as centre of all theology can function as criterion, in *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* justification is embedded in the church (§ 80). In this way *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* reflects *Salvation and the Church*, however, it differs from it in its explicit relationship between justification (and not the broader: salvation) and the church, so that the criteriological function justification has of itself, is maintained, without claiming an exclusive central position for it⁵⁴². Hence, the relativization of justification in *Salvation and the Church* is not part of the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue, but at the same time church and justification are more closely connected to each other than is the case in *Church and Justification*. Nevertheless, the relationship between the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation and its dependency on salvation as God's unconditional gift, appears to be an unsolved problem in those parts of the report in which Reformed and Roman Catholic views on the church are confronted with each other, in particular in the fields of authority, sacraments, ordination, episkopè (ministry of oversight) and structure of ministry. A substantial section of the report is devoted to questions regarding these subjects. The outward perspective, the reconciliation of humanity, its liberation, the other concepts used, remain out of sight, as if the content of the 'common witness in the world today' (the title of a part of the last section) is not of consequence to the question how the relationship between ecclesiology and soteriology is discussed.

541 In *Church and Justification* and *Salvation and the Church* the method used reflects the more confronting approach of the former and the more fluid approach of the latter. In *Church and Justification* the Lutheran and Roman Catholic positions are frequently put together and regarded not to be contradictory, whereas in *Salvation and the Church* there is only one view on which Anglicans and Roman Catholics can agree.

542 The fact that justification in Reformed theology has a different, less prominent place is reflected in the different dialogues in which the Reformed churches participate. In the *Leuenberg Agreement* justification is articulated as the heart of the gospel, in the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue (*Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*) it also has a prominent place, just like the Reformed-Methodist. In other dialogue reports, (e.g. the Anglican-Reformed, *God's Reign and Our Unity*, and the Disciples-Reformed, *Towards Closer Fellowship*), however, 'our common faith' is summarized without using the 'justification' formula. Cf. also Blei, 'The WARC in Bilateral Dialogue' in: Wilson, *Bilateral Dialogues*, 8.

The appropriation question is not always related to ecclesiology. In the Evangelical-Roman Catholic and Reformed-Methodist dialogue the instrumentality of the church in the appropriation of salvation is not under discussion. The Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue (*ERCDOM*) speaks of a plurality in the understanding of salvation, concentrates, however, on the character of the response to God's offer of salvation. Hence, the question is not whether a response is necessary - on this issue Evangelicals are much closer to the Roman Catholic tradition than Lutherans or Reformed are - but regarding the nature of the necessity of the human reply in order to be saved. The major dissimilarity concerns the exclusivity or inclusivity of salvation in Christ. Evangelicals tend to regard the individual response as a condition for salvation. The nature of this response is that it is truly human, rather than the work of God. The Roman Catholic view of the nature of the human response in *ERCDOM* is less strict and subjective - and here Roman Catholics are closer to the churches of the Reformation. Salvation does not depend on our exclusive subjective response, but on God's work through Christ. In the Roman Catholic view the objectivity of salvation does not exclude the world but includes it, hence salvation history merges with the world's history - the objection to too much harmony between salvation and world-history is the common ground of Evangelicals and the Reformation churches over against Roman Catholic theology. Hence, the preference of Evangelicals for understanding salvation as justification tends to concern more its objective than its subjective side. In fact, the attention to justification is 'overrun' by the concern for the personal experience of being born again. The Methodist-Reformed (*Together in God's Grace*) dialogue struggles with the relationship between God's sovereignty and human free will. Whereas in the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue (*Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*) the (Reformed) attention to sovereignty was referred to in relation to ecclesiology, here it refers to its relationship with anthropology. The problem of the appropriation of salvation is not solved with reference to the mystery of God and the principle of unanswerability of these questions.

In the Lutheran-Reformed dialogue (*Leuenberg Agreement, Toward Church Fellowship*) the discussion on the appropriation of salvation plays a minor role. The use of justification as key term on which in particular the *Leuenberg Agreement* is based is not discussed in the report itself, nor are accompanying questions concerning the appropriation of salvation. Since ecclesiology is not an element of the necessary agreement on church unity, questions such as its instrumentality etc. are not considered. However, against the background of the dialogues in which Lutherans and Reformed are involved it is clear that in the case of the *Leuenberg Agreement* the option for *Confessio Augustana* VII (the right teaching/preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments) as basic principle, conceived as justification ('true understanding of the gospel'), indicates that a specific position is chosen in the discussion on the appropriation of salvation.

By way of conclusion, we could say that the appropriation of salvation is the main issue with regard to soteriology as a theme in ecumenical dialogue. Though dealt with differently, the heart of the problem touches upon the relationship between God and humankind. More precisely: on the roles played by God and by the human being in this appropriation. The result of the dialogues is that the initiative of God is recognized by all participants. Salvation is regarded as God's once and for all action in Christ as a gift for humanity. The disagreements are to be found in the nature of the relationship between God and the human being in the follow-up of what is indisputably seen as God's salvific initiative towards humanity. Some are inclined to assign a rather constitutive role to the human being, whereas others want to lay every emphasis on the insignificance or even absence of his/her role. Some fear ungodly synergism. Others, however, are afraid of an underestimation of the efficacy of God's salvific

deeds. These disagreements come to the surface in particular when the position of the church in the appropriation is dealt with. Principally the church is dependent on the divine initiative, however, when it concerns more concrete issues being part of ecclesiology, such as church structures, sacraments, ministry, episcopacy, the bishop of Rome, continuity, sinfulness of the church etc. problems arise as to what extent these ecclesiastical bodies and persons are passively or actively involved in the appropriation of salvation. This holds true not only for the dialogues we have analysed above and which deal with soteriology as such, but also for other dialogues, such as the Anglican-Orthodox, Baptist-Roman Catholic, Disciples of Christ-Roman Catholic, Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogues and ARCIC I, which pay attention to ecclesiological issues in particular, without explicitly going into soteriology.

In the international Anglican-Orthodox dialogue the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation is not discussed. However, the disagreement on the question whether the church can be seen as sinful and affected by its division reflects a disagreement on the question whether the church's role in the mediation of salvation is a more or less constitutive one⁵⁴³.

In ARCIC I, the first phase of the international Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, similar problems are dealt with in the field of eucharist, ministry and authority. The Windsor statement e.g., announced substantial agreement on the doctrine of the Eucharist⁵⁴⁴. However, questions were asked about the way salvation is appropriated in the eucharist. In the 1979 *Elucidation*⁵⁴⁵ the ARCIC commission clarified its position by stating that the church is dependent on the once for all event of salvation in Christ (passive), but, on the other hand, the church is actively involved in the eucharist and thus instrument in the appropriation of salvation.

In the first Baptist-Roman Catholic international dialogue⁵⁴⁶ the question of appropriation arises in particular in the area of baptism, although it was already mentioned in the common Christological statement⁵⁴⁷. Both agree that the offer of salvation is received in faith as a gift of God. They differ as to how one can be involved in this process. For Baptists there is first of all the experience of personal conversion wherein a person receives, in faith, God's saving grace in Jesus Christ as a free gift. As a result, Baptism is the testimony to this initial experience. Appropriation of salvation is accomplished through personal experience and acceptance ("the faith response precedes baptism", § 49). For Catholics, this process is directly connected with the act of the sacrament of baptism as such⁵⁴⁸. Faith is also presumed, but this does not

543 "... we are not agreed on the account to be given of the sinfulness and division which is to be observed in the life of Christian communities. For Anglicans, because the Church under Christ is the community where God's grace is at work, healing and transforming sinful men and women; and because grace in the Church is mediated by those who are themselves undergoing such transformation, the struggle between grace and sin is to be seen as characteristic of, rather than accidental to, the Church on earth. For Orthodox, while agreeing that the human members of the Church on earth are sinful, do not believe that sinfulness should be ascribed to the Church as the body of Christ indwelt by the Holy Spirit", *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: The Dublin Agreed Statement 1984*, London (SPCK) 1984, 44 (= § 99).

544 Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 68-72.

545 Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 72-79.

546 'Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World: A Report on the Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversations, 1984-1988', *ISer* 72/1 (1990) 5-14; *OiC* 26/3 (1990) 238-255. The wish to enter into a second phase of dialogue was expressed by the PCPCU, but the Baptist World Alliance has not answered affirmatively so far, probably due to some internal criticism evoked by the first report *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World*.

547 "Our discussion uncovered no significant differences with regard to the doctrine of the person and work of Christ, although some did appear with regard to the appropriation of Christ's saving work" (§ 10).

548 Cf. also the summary statement of the second triennium in the Southern Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue in the USA (1982-1984). In the Southern Baptist understanding baptism "testifies a prior experience of grace... In addition, Roman Catholics believe that baptism, as a sacrament, is also a means of grace. For them, baptism not

exclusively mean *personal* faith: "in the case of an infant, this faith is considered to be supplied by the community" (§ 18). Appropriation of the saving work of Christ is primarily accomplished through faith and the sacraments in the church⁵⁴⁹.

In the first phase of the Disciples of Christ-Roman Catholic international dialogue⁵⁵⁰ the appropriation question appears in the discussion on baptism. In the spiritual unity of the church God's plan of salvation is expressed in the world⁵⁵¹. That does not mean that the church is the exclusive place for which salvation is intended, since "God's saving power in the world is unlimited" (§ 35). It implies that it is the place in which the future unity of the Kingdom is anticipated. The Spirit gathers all those people who are ready to accept God's saving intention through faith. Baptism plays an important role in the acceptance of this intention. It is the entrance into a new relationship with God (§ 29) through the participation in Christ's life, his ministry, suffering, death and resurrection for the salvation of the world (§ 35). Appropriation of salvation particularly means: participation in the movement of God's salvific purpose for the entire creation, led by the Spirit. Through baptism one takes part in this plan of salvation. Both Roman Catholics and Disciples agree that this incorporation into the Body of Christ presupposes faith (§ 31). Faith is God's gift (grace) through the Spirit, both to the individual and to the community (§ 42). However, Disciples and Catholics differ in their understanding in what

only confirms that grace is already present in a person's heart, but baptism can also be a moment when grace is experienced in a new way", 'Growing Understanding: A Progress Report on American Baptist-Roman Catholic Dialogue' in: J.A. Burgess/J. Gros (ed), *Building Unity: Ecumenical Dialogues with Roman Catholic Participation in the United States*, Ecumenical Documents 4, New York (Paulist Press) 1989, 48. The same tendencies appear in the 1986-1988 statement 'How We Agree/How We Differ' which says that "Southern Baptists stress the experience of salvation when, in faith, a person accepts Jesus as his or her personal Saviour. Catholics tend to emphasize the work of Christ and the way in which the effect of the redemption by Christ is made available to the faithful through faith and the sacraments in the church", 'How We Agree/How We Differ: Roman Catholic-Southern Baptist. The Scholars' Dialogue (1986-1988)' in: J.A. Burgess/J. Gros (ed), *Growing Consensus: Church Dialogues in the United States, 1962-1991*, Ecumenical Documents 5, New York (Paulist Press) 1995, 558.

549 Cf. also the first phase (1972-1976) of the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogue, in which appropriation of salvation in relation to baptism is regarded to be "the point of greatest tension and theological difficulty" in the discussion". It is agreed that baptism "involves a passing over from the kingdom of darkness to Christ's kingdom of light" (a paradigm for describing what salvation effectuates). It is also agreed that sacraments (i.e. baptism) "are in no sense magical and are effective only in relationship to faith" (§ 22) and that God's grace precedes any human involvement (§ 23). But differences emerge regarding the relationship between baptism, faith, repentance and receiving the Spirit. Whereas the Roman Catholics have a sacramental understanding of baptism by which one becomes (objectively) a child of God, the Pentecostals consider baptism to be an (subjective) act of obedience (ordinance) to the example and command of Christ and not as 'regenerational baptism'. That is why Pentecostals have no problems baptizing a believing adult who has received infant baptism. They do not consider this as rebaptism ("in the strict sense of the word unacceptable to all" [§ 27]) but as a kind of reaffirming one's baptism. Cf. the 'Final Report of the Dialogue Between the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and Leaders of Some Pentecostal Churches and Participants in the Charismatic Movement within Protestant and Anglican Churches 1972-1976' (Rome 1976) published in Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 422-431; *OiC* 12/4 (1976) 309-318; *ISer* 32/3 (1976) 32-37. In the third phase, dealing with *koinonia*, the issue of baptism returns, accompanied with the telling footnote (no. 7, between § 38 and 39) that "we devote a special section to baptism because of the difficulty which baptism and the practice of baptism have in our dialogue". Again the partners in discussion agree on the indispensability of faith, but the question remains whether "baptism is a *constitutive* means of salvation" (§ 51); 'Perspectives on Koinonia: The report from the third quinquennium of the dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and some classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders 1985-1989', *ISer* 75/4 (1990) 179-191.

550 'Report on the International Commission for Dialogue between Disciples of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church, 1977-1981', *ISer* 49/2-3 (1982) 65-73; Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement* 153-166.

551 "... there can be only one Church of God (*unica Ecclesia*) and ... this Church already exists. It is the accomplishment of salvation, both individually and corporately, for all humanity. This salvation to which Scripture bears witness expresses God's purpose for the entire creation" (§ 56).

sense baptism and faith are related to each other. Disciples want a personal confession of faith and repentance to precede baptism, because this "is the form of baptism explicitly attested in the New Testament" (§ 33). When it comes to personal confession of faith, this means consequently only adult baptism. Roman Catholics baptise infants "for historical, theological and pastoral reasons" (§ 33). Hence the question is not about infant baptism *or* adult baptism but whether one should consider baptism as a confirmation of faith that is to be preceded by a personal confession of faith or as salvific event which takes place in the church and presupposes the faith of the community and the effectiveness of the sacrament. In the second phase the question of appropriation is present in a more hidden way, due to the chosen method. The report *The Church as Communion in Christ*⁵⁵² does not deal with a number of separate issues that have divided the two church communions. It is a kind of fundamental agreement on the understanding of the church as participating in God's plan of salvation. Salvation (interpreted as forgiveness of sin, new life, new creation, children of God, § 21) is effectuated in the communion given by God. The church, therefore is sign of salvation ("to be saved is to be in communion", § 49) but also the community through which salvation is offered and the instrument "the Holy Spirit uses in order to extend salvation to all human situations and needs..." (§ 51). This agreement serves as a framework in which specific points can be dealt with in future discussions⁵⁵³. Those points, which are mentioned in § 11-17 ('Differences in Christian Faith and Life'), reveal the ecclesiological differences which possibly play a role in discussion about the appropriation of salvation: (dis)continuity in the church (apostolic faith), eucharist, sinfulness of the church, teaching authority⁵⁵⁴.

Finally, the question of the appropriation is also discussed in the international Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue. In the 1981 *Honolulu Report*⁵⁵⁵ (theme: pneumatology) the appropriation is dealt with in an individual way, but in the 1986 Nairobi report⁵⁵⁶ (*Towards a Statement on the Church*) the role of the church is discussed. In the *Honolulu Report*, which explicitly pays attention to justification⁵⁵⁷, both Methodists and Roman Catholics agree that 'pre-venience' is the

552 'The Church as Communion in Christ: Report of the Second Phase of the International Disciples of Christ/Roman Catholic Dialogue, 1983-1992', *ISer* 84/3-4 (1993) 162-169.

553 The PCPCU judges this agreement as follows: "Perhaps the most significant aspect of that common framework of understanding is on the Church as communion in relation to God's plan of salvation, because it touches on one of the most controversial debates which surfaced during the time of the Reformation, namely, the Church as sacrament and instrument of salvation", 'Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council, November 13-18, 1995', *ISer* 91/1-2 (1996) 42.

554 Cf. also the chapter on 'Future Work' (§ 53-54) at the end of the document.

555 'Report of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, Third Series, 1977-1981', *ISer* 46/2 (1981) 84-96; Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 367-387.

556 'Towards a Statement on the Church: Report of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, Fourth Series, 1982-1986', *ISer* 62/4 (1986) 206-216; J.M.R. Tillard, 'Commentary on "Towards a Statement on the Church"', *ISer* 62/4 (1986) 216-219.

557 In 1987 H. Meyer argued in *Rechtfertigung im Ökumenischen Dialog* that until then the Methodist-Roman Catholic *Honolulu Report* was the only bilateral dialogue in which no Lutherans were involved and yet paid attention to the issue of justification. The Reformed were said not to pay attention to justification at all except for their discussions with Lutherans. In the meantime the Reformed substantially discussed justification in their dialogue with the Roman Catholics in the report *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*. As Meyer added in a note, so did the Anglicans preparing the ARCIC II report *Salvation and the Church* at that time. Some references to justification were made in the Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue (cf. § 10 in 'Summons to Witness To Christ in Today's World: a Report on the Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversations 1984-1988', *ISer* 72/1 (1990) 5-14; *OiC* 26/3 (1990) 238-255), the Methodist-Reformed dialogue *Together in God's Grace* and the dialogue between Reformed and Disciples of Christ (*Towards Closer Fellowship: Report of the Dialogue between Reformed and Disciples of Christ*, Studies from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches 11, Geneva (WARC) 1988). With regard to this last document it is interesting that Karel Blei, in his overview of Reformed involvement in bilateral dialogues, states that "in the Lutheran-Reformed report the justification by grace, through faith, is articulated as the key content of the gospel, the heart of 'our common faith' (see also the

key-concept to the understanding of the appropriation (§ 14). God's initiative precedes all human action and reaction, and only his prevenient grace moves us to conversion⁵⁵⁸. But there is also a need for the co-operation of humanity with God in the work of salvation⁵⁵⁹. Hence, the declaration of justification is not identified with salvation itself but salvation is a diachronical (*pre-venience*) process, authorized by God (justification by grace), in which subsequently humanity can co-operate in freedom to consummate it in regeneration and sanctification⁵⁶⁰. In *Towards a Statement on the Church* salvation is said to be realized in the redemptive act of God in Christ (§ 3). The church has its origin in this act, and now it "lives between the times of the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ and his future coming in glory" led by the Spirit (§ 8). It is enabled to serve as "sign, sacrament and harbinger of the Kingdom of God" (§ 8). Because "Christ works through his Church" (§ 9) both Roman Catholics (in accordance with Vaticanum II) and 'many' (§ 9) Methodists can speak about the sacramentality of the church. Here the church is seen as a kind of a means of salvation, "an outward manifestation of God's grace among us and signifying in some way the grace and call to salvation addressed by God to the whole human race" (§ 9). It is remarkable that the description of the church as playing a part in the appropriation of salvation emphasizes particularly its 'sign-character'. The comment of J.M.R. Tillard from a Roman Catholic perspective, that the effectiveness of the church as a sacrament is missing, shows that the heart of the ecclesiological discussion lies in the question of the appropriation⁵⁶¹. A sacramental interpretation of the church which lays stress on the efficacy of this sacramentality causes more problems for the Methodist church than the interpretation given in this document.

Although the question of appropriation is the main issue regarding salvation as a theme in ecumenical dialogue, it is not the only way soteriology is dealt with. There are other aspects of soteriology under discussion, but, compared to the appropriation question, these aspects get considerably less attention. With regard to the meaning of salvation it emerges that the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue has its own specific place in the spectrum, in particular in the regional and national dialogues⁵⁶². The USA dialogue *Christ in Us and Christ for Us* explicitly

report of the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue in its second phase on 'Our Common Confession of Faith', and the Reformed-Methodist report in its section on 'Reflection on Our Heritage'). In other dialogue reports (such as the Anglican-Reformed and the Disciples-Reformed reports), however, 'our common faith' is summarized without using the 'justification' formula" (Blei, 'The WARC in Bilateral Dialogue' in: Wilson, *Bilateral Dialogues*, 8). This is true insofar as justification is not mentioned in chapter II, called 'Our Common Faith'. Yet this is understandable because common faith is explained here in terms of calling and mission of the church. Justification, however, is mentioned as central issue in the chapter on baptism and the issue of baptism is seen to be one of the most important questions in the dialogue (cf. § 7).

558 "By grace we are saved through faith, not because of works" (Honolulu § 19) Already the 1970 *Denver Report* had noticed that both Methodists and Roman Catholics recognize the absolute priority of God's grace over all our striving. The *Denver* section 'Historical Background' (of spirituality) states: "... both... recognize God's gracious prevenience" (§ 55); "Both traditions hold man's cooperation with God in the Mystery of salvation as necessary" (§ 55). "Both traditions converge in '... a dynamic process of growth in grace, from the threshold of faith (justification) toward the fullness of faith (sanctification)...'" (§ 55).

559 "... a sinner... is reborn and given the power to turn away from a life curved back upon itself toward a 'new life'" (Honolulu § 15).

560 Cf. Birmelé, *Le salut*, 347.

561 The church "is not exterior to the work of salvation", and "the dimension of effective help, of service, and of cooperation is, ..., certainly put very much in the shade". The subjective part of the church as a means of salvation, the "link between the Church and the actualization of the salvation brought about by our Lord Jesus Christ" is missing; Tillard, 'Commentary on Towards a Statement on the Church', 217; the same in *OiC* 22/3 (1986) 261.

562 Compared to the variety of Lutheran-Orthodox initiatives the Orthodox-Reformed dialogue is rather limited. On the international level the dialogue started in 1986 resulting in an agreement on the Trinity, published in T.F. Torrance, (ed), *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox & Reformed Churches*, volume 2, Edinburgh (Scottish Academic Press) 1990 and an Agreed Statement on Christology from 1994. With regard to soteriology we refer

declares that "the central focus has not been so much on the 'how' of salvation as on the 'content' of salvation"⁵⁶³. Thus the discussion refrains from going into the question of appropriation and concentrates on the level of interpretation. Because of the different backgrounds from which both churches originate, it is clear that the character of the report is exploratory. Questions like 'What is meant by justification?', 'What is meant by *theosis*?', and 'Where do these concepts meet or do they exclude each other?', define the structure of the report. The different interpretations are generally seen as differences of accents, rooting in different parts of the Scriptures and developing from different historical and theological backgrounds. They are not absolute positions. Nevertheless, the exploratory character of the report cannot conceal that some day the issue of appropriation is very likely to appear as a point of discussion in future talks. The issue of free will and justification, the link between justification and sanctification and holy life, directly relate to the question of appropriation, not to mention the issue of ecclesiology which is not addressed in relation to salvation. More advanced in this respect is the older Finnish/Russian Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue. Although it remains on the interpretative level with regard to justification and *theosis*, its efforts to bring justification and *theosis* close together by way of a more ontological approach to justification, have far-going implications for the way appropriation of salvation is understood, in particular when applied to ecclesiology. Another aspect of this Finnish/Russian Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue is its eschatological outlook. The eschatological aspect of salvation gets specific attention in terms of its wholeness and completeness in the future. All that is said and done in relation to salvation in present times is conditioned by its provisional character. 'Salvation today' (a reference to the WCC's Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Bangkok 1973) is an anticipation of final and perfect salvation or, seen from an eschatological perspective, future salvation is the complete fulfilment of everything already experienced in Christ.

Actually, this specific attention to eschatology does not occur frequently in bilateral dialogues. There are references to eschatology, but only marginally and depending on the main theme of a specific dialogue. Generally spoken eschatology does not play a role in bilateral dialogues. There are a few exceptions, such as the *Llandaff Statement* between Anglicans and Orthodox, the last section of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue *Church and Justification* and the Old Catholic-Orthodox dialogue *Koinonia auf altkirchlicher Basis*⁵⁶⁴. In the *Llandaff Statement* attention is paid to the communion of saints and the dead⁵⁶⁵. Here the cross and resurrection of

to the Orthodox-Reformed dialogue in North America between 1968 and 1970. There was no agreed statement by those three meetings, however soteriology was one of the themes which were discussed. J. Meyendorff concludes: "A really extraordinary consensus was reached during the third and last meeting. Hearing their Reformed colleagues accepting the speaking in terms of 'synergy' and 'divinisation' (*theosis*), the Orthodox were seriously shattered in their preconceived notions about Calvinist predestinationism", J. Meyendorff/J. McLelland (ed), *The New Man: An Orthodox and Reformed Dialogue*, New Brunswick (Standard Press) 1973, 165.

563 Meyendorff/Tobias, *Salvation in Christ*, 14.

564 Urs von Arx (ed), *Koinonia auf altkirchlicher Basis: Deutsche Gesamtausgabe der gemeinsamen Texte des orthodox-altkatholischen Dialogs 1975-1987 mit französischer und englischer Übersetzung*, Beiheft zur IKZ 4, Bern 1989. The title of this volume is not the official title of the report which consists of a number of agreed statements.

565 *Llandaff Statement*, 1980: *The Communion of the Saints and the Dead* in: Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 57-59. The Llandaff Statement was part of the second phase of the international Anglican-Orthodox dialogue, which began in 1977. Initially, the actual ordination of women in some of the Anglican churches led to a special statement: the *Athens Statement* of 1978 (Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 50-56), but in 1980 the dialogue resumed which led to the publication of the *Llandaff Statement*. Other work of the second phase including the text of the *Llandaff Statement* (with some minor changes in § 5, 6, 7 and 13, in the classification of the *Dublin Agreement* § 70, 71, 72 and 78) was finally brought together in the *Dublin Agreed Statement* of 1984 (*Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: The Dublin Agreed Statement 1984*, London (SPCK) 1984). The first phase of the Anglican-Orthodox had started in Oxford 1973 at the first full meeting of the so-called 'Anglican-Orthodox

Christ, or better, the crucified and risen Christ is the heart of human's salvation, which is characterized as personal union with God and with all who belong to him (§ 3). Those who believe are in abiding union with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit because "death is no longer an impassable barrier" (§ 5). "Even those in hell are not deprived of the love of God" (§ 6) but this depends on a person's free choice or attitude (§ 6): "by their own free choice they experience as torment what the saints experience as joy" (§ 6). The trinitarian approach of *Llandaff* concentrates entirely on personal salvation "after death and before the general resurrection" (§ 7), due to the fact that the supposed problems between Anglicans and Orthodox are considered to lie in the field of prayer for the dead and invocation of the saints and related issues like the rejection of any doctrine of purgatory (§ 7) or treasury of merits (§ 9). The other exception is the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue *Church and Justification*. Although eschatology is at stake not as a separate theme but in its relation to ecclesiology, the relatively considerable amount of attention demonstrates that eschatology has its own particular place in the document. The report's basic understanding of the church, viz. its role as recipient and mediator of salvation, also becomes clear from its end and consummation. First, similar to the *Llandaff Statement*, attention is paid to the church as communion of saints (§ 291-296). This *sanctorum communio* is understood as a communion with God which "has already been given and realized on earth through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit" (§ 295) and which, because it is founded in God, reaches beyond death and encompasses both the saints on earth as well as those who have already died. Possible controversial issues like purgatory, stages after death, and hell, that were related to prayers for the dead, to free choice and to the consequences for (non-)believers' attitude in the *Llandaff Statement* are not discussed. Secondly, the place of the church in the reign of God is considered. This broader approach, which is absent in the *Llandaff Statement*, takes into account the concept of history and its end, in particular of the church, in relation to the kingdom of God (§ 297-308)⁵⁶⁶. It refers to the kingdom of God as the core of the

Joint Doctrinal Discussions' (AOJDD). At the second full meeting in Moscow 1976 the first joint statement, the *Moscow Statement* (Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 41-49) was published. In 1988 the third phase started by the so-called International Commission of the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue. For a general introduction to Anglican-Orthodox relations cf. C. Davey, 'Anglicans and Eastern Christendom', *Sobornost* 7/2 (1985) 6-17 and H. Wybrew, 'Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue: Its Past, Its Present and Its Future', *Sobornost* 15/1 (1993) 7-19.

⁵⁶⁶ With regard to the relationship between church and kingdom there is some thematic correspondence to the 1981-1984 international Anglican-Reformed dialogue which produced one report so far, called *God's Reign and Our Unity*. Similar to *Church and Justification*, the overall theme of the document is ecclesiology, however here related to the quest for unity and there to the understanding of the place and role of justification. Starting-point is the belief that the church is not an end in itself but has to be understood in the perspective of the kingdom of God which focuses not specifically on Christian unity but first and foremost on human unity. The 'wider perspective' (§ 19-24) of the unity of humankind as God's first purpose determines the nature of the church and its striving for unity. Hence, "concern for the unity of all humankind is the only proper context for the quest of church unity, it is not a reason for abandoning that quest" (§ 18). "... if we seek for unity... it can only be in order that the Church may become a more credible sign, instrument and foretaste of God's purpose" (§ 17). So the church's task is to reflect, anticipate and mediate the kingdom: "in the Church we participate in the life of the triune God in fulfilment of the purpose of creation" (§ 43). So the missionary and eschatological perspective constitute the framework in which the unity of the church must be seen. The kingdom itself is the "eschatological perspective", "the goal which lies beyond our sight" (§ 58), "the ultimate order which transcends history" (§ 32) and its full realization lies ahead of us. In the report the interpretation of eschatology as the doctrine of the last things is not elaborated because it not an issue that hinders unity between Anglicans and Reformed. It is the perspective under which the question of unity is dealt with. Here the report differs from *Church and Justification* in which the prevailing perspective is justification under which the issue of eschatology related to the church is considered. Cf. *God's Reign and Our Unity: The Report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission 1981-1984*, London (SPCK)-Edinburgh (The Saint Andrew Press) 1984: "For too many Christians the Church is seen only in static terms, the religious aspect of society, a home of refuge from the storms of life, a bark to carry the passengers safe into harbour - or rather a flotilla of boats among which each person is free to choose the most attractive. So long as the Church is seen in this way there will be no urgency about the quest for unity" (§ 14).

preaching and serving, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through him the kingdom is present⁵⁶⁷. So the church itself is not the same as the kingdom and accordingly the report abstains from unjustified ecclesiological triumphalism and centralism. The church is called the 'actual people' of God in whom the kingdom is already kindled and through whom it is to be extended. As such the church is the recipient of salvation through its Lord in the Holy Spirit (§ 304); but it is also the mediator of salvation as it is taken into service as sign and instrument for the kingdom, despite human weakness and sin. The tension between the reality of the powers of the kingdom of God - in word and sacraments as means of salvation and the reconciled community as place of salvation - and the interim nature of all words, signs and communion in which salvation is imparted will cease only at the end of ages when God himself implements and reveals the kingdom in its entirety⁵⁶⁸. The Old-Catholic-Orthodox dialogue also refers to the connection between ecclesiology and eschatology in its dealing with the Doctrine of the Last Things. Here, there are fewer references to what was called the tension between the ecclesiological reality of salvation and the interim character of its impartation in *Church and Justification*. The ambiguity of the presence of the kingdom of God in the church is less outspoken. The emphasis is rather on continuity: "Eschatological hope is no empty experience, since the end of time has already commenced in the midst of the life of the Church, which represents the continued unfolding reality of the Kingdom of God in historical time"⁵⁶⁹. Contrary to the *Llandaff Statement* and *Church and Justification* the work on 'Life after Death' and 'The Resurrection of the Dead and the Renewal of the World' directly leads into the consideration of questions about the situation ("what happens?") after death and at the end of time. In accordance with the aim of the Old Catholic-Orthodox dialogue (to express together the whole field of their common faith) it addresses the theme of eschatology itself, whereas the other documents deal with eschatology under the heading of ecclesiology, particularly the communion of saints.

In spite of the progress that has been made in agreement on the way how human beings appropriate salvation and what is the role of the church in this respect, the scope of the dialogues has become rather narrow. The increasing attention to ecclesiology as the main theme of ecumenical dialogues has resulted in a confined perspective. With regard to soteriology this means that the focus on the way how salvation is appropriated has pushed aside the concern for a relevant interpretation of salvation itself. The predominant concern for justification as interpretation of salvation is determined by its confessional disposition rather than by questions concerning its relevance. This does not mean that justification cannot have a prominent place as interpreting the concept of soteriology, but generally spoken this possibility is hardly articulated or debated⁵⁷⁰. Starting-point is the confessionally oriented position which as such is not

567 It is interesting that here the report returns to the place of Israel, like it did at the outset (§ 13 and onwards). Although God through Christ has created an actual people of Jews and Gentiles in the church, a "new" (between quotations marks in the report, § 299) people of God, this people is "still fundamentally related to Israel" (§ 299). The origin of salvation-history is to be found in Israel. It "became salvation to the nations and will also be saved (cf. *Rom* 9-11)" (§ 299).

568 "The kingdom of God is therefore the church's constant orientation, abiding motivation, critical court of appeal and final goal... At the end... it will come to an end because it is no longer needed as sign and instrument. But this end is also the consummation of its earthly form as the place of God's reign and the beginning of its new, definitive existence in the eternal kingdom of God" (§ 304).

569 Von Arx, *Koinonia auf altkirchlicher Basis*, 224 (= Eschatology VI/I,1)).

570 Meyer and Gassmann refer to some exceptions: the Lutheran-Reformed dialogue in the USA (1983), called *An Invitation to Action*, speaks of the doctrine of justification which "continues to be a message of hope and of new life to persons alienated from our gracious God and from one another" (Joint Statement on Justification § 5). The Episcopal-Lutheran dialogue in the USA states in its Joint Statement on Justification in chapter 3C: "In the western cultural setting in which our communions... find themselves, the gospel of justification continues to address the needs of human beings alienated from a holy and gracious God" (*Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue*:

challenged. Hence, the implications of justification for our understanding of God, the human being and creation, remain in the background; implications that are of profound relevance to common witness which the churches strive for in their particular circumstances. Ultimately, the question of salvation is a question about God and the human being in his/her relationship to other human beings and the 'rest' of creation. Therefore, precisely theology (in the sense of: doctrine of God) and anthropology in its widest sense are the issues which should be discussed as well, in order to prevent the churches agreeing on something which is occasionally received by its members. It is no accident that current questions on ecumenical reception are a burning issue⁵⁷¹. Who grants us salvation? Do we and why do we need salvation? and What could salvation mean? those are questions which are as relevant for the unity of the churches as questions about the appropriation of salvation. The interpretation of appropriation itself depends to a large extent on these theological and anthropological questions. In the early days of bilateral dialogues this wider perspective of the meaning of salvation played a bigger role in the discussions. This was not yet the case during the 1934 Edinburgh conference. We have seen how questions related to the contemporary relevance of the discussion on grace were pushed aside in favour of a rather formal approach. Against the background of the dark clouds over Europe in those pre-war years this approach could be one of the reasons that *The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ* never received prime attention in ecumenical dialogues. In fact, Edinburgh reveals in a nutshell the limitations of an ecumenical approach that searches for answers without explicitly asking in what sense the question on the agenda is still a relevant question. In his *Memoirs* Visser 't Hooft makes the critical remark that Edinburgh "did not break much new ground. At the same time it was very largely composed of theologians and church administrators. One missed the layman with his sensitiveness to the realities of the modern world"⁵⁷². Maybe this underestimates the value of the agreement on grace, how premature it may have been, but it characterizes quite well the absence of any attempt to relate the issue of grace to the era in which it was discussed. In the 1960's, during the birth, or the conception, of many bilateral dialogues, this relationship was evident in the ecumenical movement in general. This affected the choice of the themes. So the 'mother' of the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, the *Malta Report*, 1972, devoted a chapter to the relationship between Gospel and World, in the first phase of the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue, *The Presence*

Second Series 1976-1980: Report and Recommendations, Cincinnati (Forward Movement Press) 1981, 23). Most outspoken is the European Anglican-Lutheran dialogue which does not start its section on justification (ch. 3 on Doctrinal Issues [= § 17-21]) with the common references to the respective heritages, but by sketching the contemporary meaning of justification: "It is in view of our common situation that the doctrine of justification takes on a fresh relevance. Today, as at all times, there are people who are burdened by their awareness of personal guilt or their sense of estrangement from God. Their troubled conscience leads them to ask whether there is a merciful God. But in addition there are now many people in our societies who suffer in a different way under a burden of fear, frustration and alienation. They have lost any sense of meaning in life. They have no confidence in the future. The reasons for this sense of despair are well known: the threat of nuclear destruction, economic instability, disappointment with the belief that technology and science are able to master our human destiny, a loss of personal certainty and identity, and a refusal to continue to serve the idols of progress, achievement, success and status" (§ 17) (*Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue: The Report of the European Regional Commission, Helsinki 1982*, London (SPCK) 1983, 8). The terminology of 'alienation' is not foreign to other bilateral dialogues, but often in a general use, speaking of "... the love of God manifested to an alienated and lost humanity" (*Salvation and the Church* § 18); or " we are called to pass from the alienation and oppression of sin..." (*Justification by Faith* § 161), or as part of the catalogue pointing to the other side of salvation (*ERCDOM* 47 [iii,5]).

571 A.W.J. Houtepen, 'Ökumenische Dokumente... und was dann? Die ökumenischen Dialogen und ihre Rezeption vierzig Jahre später', *US* 59 (2004/2)110 – 124.

572 Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, 75.

of *Christ in Church and World*⁵⁷³, church and world are both related to God's salvific action⁵⁷⁴, and the first two Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogues explicitly situate their discussions within questions from the contemporary world that confront Christianity. The 1971 *Denver Report*⁵⁷⁵ starts by presenting an agreed statement on 'Christianity and the Contemporary World' in which the "major characteristics of the world in which Christians are called upon to live, and, on the other hand, the ways by which men may move towards a living faith in these times" (§ 29) are described. In an attempt to search for a common spirituality ("it is not enough in ecumenical dialogue to look to the past for the comfort of a common heritage of spirituality" [§ 57]) the report gives a first tentative reaction to what a Christian response to the world could be⁵⁷⁶. A similar missiological approach is to be found in the 1976 *Dublin Report*, which was influenced by the WCC's Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Bangkok 1973 (*Salvation Today*) and the preparations for the Roman Catholic Bishops' Synod on the theme of Evangelization (which resulted in the encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*). As one of the few reports explicitly paying attention to salvation, it is not the appropriation question which dominates the soteriological content, but the question of meaning. Starting-point is the church's calling to witness to God's salvation in Christ, which "calls for a re-interpretation of salvation that goes beyond translation into contemporary language and takes account of the many ways in which people now hope and seek for salvation" (§ 11e). Thus anthropology is the leading paradigm, the ways in which human beings relate to salvation. All emphasis, influenced by *Salvation Today*, is laid on the contemporary situation in which salvation has different levels of meaning. Nevertheless, salvation is not identical to the fulfilment of human needs but "embraces every human need while transcending it" (§ 15). The eschatological notion of salvation is not pushed aside, but is used in an attributive sense rather than in a temporal sense. Precisely this temporal aspect of soteriology, ascribed to the Bangkok conference, the absence of its future aspects and the incompleteness of our present-day salvation, induced the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue between the Fins and the Russians to pay attention to soteriology in their own way⁵⁷⁷.

573 'The Presence of Christ in Church and World: Final Report of the Dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1977' in: Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 433-463; 'The Presence of Christ in Church and World: Final Report of the Dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1970-1977', *ISer* 35/3-4 (1977) 18-34 (including the Covering Letter of the two co-chairmen of the Joint Study Commission, Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B. and David Willis). Although the character of *Presence of Christ in Church and World* was exploratory and surveying rather than particularly focusing on a certain issue, the dialogue as such was meant to stand in the "broader perspective of how these would advance their common concern to manifest the relevance of Christ in the world today" (§ 4).

574 The overall theme 'The Presence of Christ in Church and World' was chosen in view of not only "the ultimate salvation of man but also on his life and happiness here and now. It was also expected that the discussion on the presence of Christ in Church and World, especially the meaning of his saving humanity, would tend to bring to light the differences between the two communions ... " (§ 5).

575 Meyer/Vischer, *Growth in Agreement*, 308-339; also 'Report of the Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, 1967-1970', *ISer* 21/3 (1973) 22-38.

576 "At least three trends in spirituality have been discerned recently, suggesting that there are possibilities for a creative response on the part of the Church and the Christian in facing the contemporary world. In the first place, there is a search for prayer as *contemplation*. This search reveals our deep need of God, our longing for salvation, our eagerness to know and to do God's will as revealed in Jesus Christ. Secondly, there is a call for *compassion*. This call is addressed to the Church which is dedicated to the primary mission of guiding persons in corporate action and in the works of justice, truth and love. Finally, there is a desire for *community*. This desire gives witness to the fact that we are to be saved as a people. It recognizes also that the Churches must pray and work together toward the true unity, wherever and whenever this is possible" (§ 59).

577 "Future salvation is the fulfilment of everything we have already experienced, because of the merit of Christ, in his Church, 'for we have been saved, though only in hope' (Rom. 8,24). This can also be expressed in an other way. 'Salvation today' (the expression occurs in Lk. 19,9) is an anticipation of final and perfect salvation" (§ 9).

Summary

In the early days of bilateral dialogues the attention given to soteriology is concentrated on questions related both to the church and to the world. As the dialogues develop, the attention given to church and world shifts to a more one-sided attention paid to ecclesiology and ecclesiological issues that have divided the churches⁵⁷⁸. Consequently, the way soteriology is dealt with is determined more and more by its relation to ecclesiology, the dominant factor in bilateral dialogues. Hence, the key question with regard to soteriology concerns the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation. The church as *creatura verbi/evangelii* or the church as *sacrament* are the two terms characterizing the tendencies that define the way the church is involved in the appropriative process. Basic to these tendencies is the question how God and humanity/creation relate to each other. Three lines of thought are noticeable, although all three underscore God's initiative in the appropriation of salvation. One tendency, however, stresses the individual involvement of the human being in the appropriation of salvation, without an active role of the church. Another tendency emphasizes the ecclesiological role in the appropriation, which for some means active co-operation when human involvement in the church is stressed, and for others means passive co-operation in so far as the ecclesiological institutions are related to the divine involvement. The third line tends to reduce the individual and ecclesiological involvement in the appropriation and emphasizes the comprehensiveness of God's appropriative action. Although in the dialogues these positions are increasingly regarded as tendencies rather than absolute positions and do not go along the confessional borderlines any more, they do determine the content of the dialogue issues to a large extent. In consequence, questions about the meaning of salvation have vanished into the background. Although the striving for unity is often placed in the context of a common witness to the world, the dialogues, to a certain extent, often go only half-way since they concentrate on unity related to internal church affairs, without explicitly asking whether the solutions to these problems contribute to their efforts towards a common credible witness. Credibility is not only a matter of unity as such, but also of the content of the witness proclaimed by the united/uniting churches. It could be that profound attention paid to the meaning of salvation - what do we mean when we speak nowadays about salvation offered to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit? - would set the discussion on the appropriation of salvation and the role of the church in a new perspective and thus lead away from questions about the rivalry between God and the human being in the appropriation of salvation.

10.2 Developments in soteriology

'Salvation', 'salut', 'Heil', is a key concept of Christian faith. Whoever celebrates the liturgy, listens to a sermon, sings a psalm or a hymn will notice that the word salvation is omnipresent. Advertisements at the local train station tell the passing travellers that 'Jesus is the only Saviour'. Evangelists at Speakers Corner in Hyde park, London, ask the audience whether they 'are saved?'. Ancient and modern creeds⁵⁷⁹, (liberation) theologians, mystics,

578 The choice to focus on ecclesiology as a general tendency in ecumenical dialogue is to be seen, among others, in ARCIC II, the Lutheran-Roman Catholic, the Methodist-Roman Catholic, the Reformed-Roman Catholic, the Orthodox-Roman Catholic, the Anglican-Reformed, the Disciples-Reformed dialogues as well as in the Joint Working Group and the multilateral dialogue of Faith and Order.

579 Nicene Creed: '... for us and our salvation...'; "In Jesus I recognize... the messenger of joy who proclaims salvation" creed from A. van der Wal in: E. Pruim, *Kort credo: 150 geloofsbelijdenissen bij de tijd*, Den Haag (Meinema) 1990, n° 141.

'ordinary' ministers ... they all refer to salvation as a, or even the heart of Christian faith. Not only Christian believers speak of salvation. Believers in other religions do the same, sometimes in different terminology⁵⁸⁰. One can also speak of salvation in a non-religious way, which may be found in all kind of '-isms' that have pretences similar to religions⁵⁸¹.

Because of its importance it is no surprise that over the last fifty years bilateral dialogues, too, have paid quite considerable attention to the issue of salvation as we have seen. If salvation is at the heart of the Christian faith, it is inevitable that in dialogues between confessions soteriology is under discussion. Some dialogues discuss the issue explicitly, sometimes soteriology is not a theme in itself, and yet it plays a role in the background. As we have described before, the way soteriology has been dealt with in ecumenical dialogues has resulted in important agreements. The *Joint Declaration* and its agreement on justification between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic tradition can be regarded as a highlight in this ecumenical process and progress after more than four centuries of disagreement, mutual anathema and separation between the both traditions. Having said this, one must admit immediately that the *Joint Declaration* does not stand on own, but partakes in a bigger process in which (bilateral) dialogues deal with salvation in their effort to grow together

Part of this growth together is to be found in the fact that many Christian confessions involved in (bilateral) dialogues nowadays agree with the – in theology – widely accepted pluralism in the way salvation can be interpreted. The healing and saving character of Jesus' presence and performance, as it is described in the New Testament Scriptures, which to a large extent are based on and are re-interpretations of the Old Testament, is explained in a variety of expressions, concepts, interpretations, models, ideas etc.

Despite this acceptance of variety we have seen that some confessions are, more than other ones, related to one specific soteriological concept. The churches issuing from the Reformation have preferred the concept of justification, whereas in the Orthodox tradition divinization (*theosis*) plays an important role. The Roman Catholic tradition has been less inclined to relate itself to a specific concept of salvation⁵⁸². In the past such a specific relationship between a concept and a certain confession has sometimes led to divisions between churches, particularly where the concentration on a certain concept was regarded as touchstone for all other concepts. In particular the concept of justification has led to disagreements and separation, especially within the churches of the western tradition. In the

580 Cf. for example J. Sperna Weiland (ed), *Antwoord: Gestalten van geloof in de wereld van nu*, Amsterdam (Meulenhoff) 1982 (2nd ed), 28: "In one way or another all religions aim at salvation of the human being". Cf. also P. Knitter who chooses a 'soteriocentric' approach instead of a theocentric one, while J. Hick adopts what he describes as 'the soteriological criterion'. For this reason 'salvation' has become "a comfortable and unitary reference point" as S.M. Heim states in his book *Salvations: Truths and Difference in Religions*, Maryknoll (Orbis Books) 1995, 129. In pluralistic theologies of religions, Heim argues, salvation is made "the universal, cross-cultural constant in interpreting religious traditions". A good example is H. Coward, *Sin and Salvation in the World Religions: A Short Introduction*, Oxford (One World) 2003 who holds that "the concept of deliverance from an imperfect human condition is present in all the world faiths". Heim refers to an article by Grace Jantzen (G.M. Jantzen, 'Human Diversity and Salvation in Christ', *Religious Studies* 20 (1984) 579-580) in which she cautions against the assumption that "all religions have a concept of salvation at all, let alone that they all mean the same thing by it or offer the same way to obtain it". In other words: a really pluralistic theology respects the plurality of any religion, also in its different view on salvation. Therefore Heim does not adopt the theory of a soteriocentered theology of religions.

581 A.Th. Peperzak, *Verlangen: de huidige mens en de vraag naar heil*, Bilthoven (Ambo) 1971, 22.

582 Maybe we could say that the concept of the sacrifice (in relation to the terminology of the eucharist) has an important place in Roman Catholic theology, but traditionally spoken the concept of the sacrifice plays a role in all western churches. They differ however about the question how 'sacrifice' can be interpreted on an ecclesiological level.

Lutheran tradition justification, as *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, has been regarded as the prime expression of the biblical understanding of salvation and point of reference for all other expressions and acts of faith.

So it is not only because salvation is at the heart of the Christian faith that it has played an important role in ecumenical dialogues, but also because it has been one of the major reasons for the break between churches in the past. New confessions arose because of serious disagreement on the interpretation of God's salvific attitude towards the world. Hence, where e.g. in the Lutheran tradition justification was fundamental to the confession and thus a certain interpretation of how salvation has to be looked upon became a criterion for the faith and the life of a confession, it is clear that this conviction came up for discussion in dialogues in which the Lutheran tradition has been involved. Consequently we have seen that salvation considered as justification has been an important subject for discussion in a number of dialogues. Indeed, not only in dialogues in which Lutherans participated, but also in dialogues in which churches of the Reformation were in dialogue with the (Roman) Catholic tradition and with churches from the East.

Sometimes these dialogues have led to a better mutual understanding, at other times they have even resulted in agreements in which historical disagreements have been overcome in the light of new insights in exegesis, biblical theology and newly developed views of certain Christian doctrines. Not only the well-known book *Justification: the doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic reflection*⁵⁸³, written by Hans Küng in the 1950's, in which he compared the view of Karl Barth with the sayings of the Council of Trent and concluded an almost full consensus on this point of doctrine, but other ecumenical endeavours as well have been important impulses for the re-examination of the doctrine of justification. As we have said before, according to this re-examination, the *Joint Declaration* between Lutherans and Roman-Catholics (1999) is the most well-known example. It is the result of a dialogue that lasted three decades and that from the outset was dominated by the justification theme. The agreement was officially received and declared a consensus in basic truths as well as in the non-application of mutual condemnations.

What strikes us in this dialogue, is that there is no discussion about the question whether justification is a valid expression of salvation. Apparently, it is regarded that way by both communions from the very beginning of the dialogue. The real question at stake is its position among other concepts and the consequence of this position for ecclesiology.

This pattern can be discerned in other dialogues as well and it shows a double movement: On the one hand we see a widening of the soteriological scope in numerous dialogues. They display an acknowledgement of the pluralism of soteriological concepts, based on a re-reading of the Scriptures, particularly those of the New Testament (the Old Testament gets rather limited attention - we will come back to that later). The biblical message itself shows that there are many ways of expressing God's gracious will for the world. The meaning of salvation is not bound up with one interpretation.

On the other hand, there is not only a widening, but also a narrowing in the soteriological perspective in many dialogues. Next to the acknowledgement of the pluralism of the meaning of salvation, we have seen that in many dialogues the attention to salvation switches quite fast from the discussion as to its meaning to that of its appropriation, esp. to its appropriation in relation to the church. The 'what' of salvation gets relatively little attention, contrary to the

583 H. Küng, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection*, New York (Nelson & Sons) 1964.

'how'. Thus over the years a considerable part of the soteriological attention in bilateral dialogues is more and more devoted to this particular question of the 'how'. Many issues concerning the working of the sacraments, the role of the ministry, the relationship between justification and sanctification, the nature of justification itself and to a lesser degree the interpretation of Jesus' death were discussed from the perspective of how the church plays a role that is related to these issues in the appropriation of salvation. Indeed, here we find consensus too, but e.g. the relation between individuals and communion, faith and institute, grace and sin, is still under discussion and the consensus itself is disputed. Hence, what we have seen is that in the ecumenical discourse the most important question concerning salvation has become its appropriation, and especially the role of the church in this process. Thus, in ecumenical dialogues soteriology has been an important theme, but more and more from a specific, limited perspective. Of course, one could say that it is obvious that ecumenical dialogues are chiefly concerned with the disagreements between churches and if this disagreement concerns ecclesiology they address ecclesiology. Here questions arise about the meaning and goal of ecumenical dialogues as such. We will come back to this later.

So ecclesiology has become the most important theme in bilateral dialogues. Not the meaning of salvation, but the question how one gets a share in it, and how the church plays or does not play a role in this process, have become the central points. What strikes us is that there is hardly any discussion about the role of God, nor about that of the human being in the appropriation. It is 'simply' taken for granted that in the process of appropriation God takes the initiative, and the question in what sense a human being is in need of salvation (and what kind of salvation) is hardly posed; its affirmation is presumed.

In resuming one could say that from a wider perspective on salvation in general or on justification in particular (which in itself could be seen as a more confined perspective of salvation), in bilateral dialogues the focus has narrowed down to the question how salvation is appropriated and with regard to justification the question at stake has become its criteriological function and use. This development is the result of ongoing dialogue sessions with their own form of dynamism. One could typify this dynamism as follows: Starting-point is an assumed difference as grounds for the separation between the (two) churches. When this particular difference is clarified, overcome or solved, - i.e. regarded as not being a reason to stay apart -, the next problem, very often directly linked to the clarified one, is tackled.

In the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues dealing with justification, this dynamism is unmistakably present. In terms of the levels that Gassmann and Meyer discern (we mentioned them before), one can see that attention to the first level, the level of *meaning* and content, has been touched upon but it is scarcely worked out. One simply agrees that justification is a relevant concept of salvation. This first level is followed by broader and longer discussions on the second one, which concerns the *place* of justification: i.e. which theological position does justification take up in the whole of theology, the life of the church and that of the individual? Here questions about its centrality and its criteriological function are at stake. In this context Gassmann and Meyer speak of "justification as a meta-dogmatic or meta-theological principle". The second level is in turn succeeded by discussions about the third level: the *application* of justification. How should justification as a criterion be employed in specific ecumenical questions⁵⁸⁴. Within this pattern of questions important progress has been made. It is the merit of ecumenical dialogues that prejudices, misunderstandings, different points of view etc. have been discussed, clarified and even solved. It is also their merit that results on assumed

⁵⁸⁴ Gassmann/Meyer, *Rechtfertigung im ökumenischen Dialog*, 12-13. Cf. G.A. Tavard, 'Justification in Dialogue', *OiC* 25 (1989) 299-310.

differences, like e.g. justification, have had their influence on other issues which were dealt with in the light of the agreements already made.

At the same time these dialogues and their proper dynamism manifest something like an unstoppable train! Once the machinery works and the locomotive moves, it seems to be hard to make stop on the journey, to take a look at the changing landscape and to look whether there are still any passengers in the train! It is the anthropological side of soteriology that has gradually disappeared from sight during the dialogues.

This is also noticed by Gassmann and Meyer in their discernment of different levels and so they have added a fourth level as to how justification is interpreted in ecumenical dialogues, be it in a note⁵⁸⁵. At this level justification is discussed with regard to 'its current interest and meaning'. They admit that this level of interpreting justification is present in some of the dialogues "be it only tentatively". It is quite revealing that this fourth level gets attention only in a note. It shows that in the actual dialogues only little attention is paid to the question of the relevance of speaking of salvation as justification. This holds true not only for justification, but grosso modo for the meaning of salvation as such. Because of the internal dynamism of the dialogues the question of relevance, which received some modest attention at the outset of the dialogues, has disappeared from sight in the course of the discussions.

We realise that the question of relevance is to a certain extent a matter of personal judgement. Relevance is a subjective notion. What in ecumenical dialogues seems relevant to us, can be irrelevant for someone else. The fact that in many dialogues problems of the past are taken up, discussed and now and then solved, is not without meaning. Moreover, it is impossible to proceed when ancient disagreements still cast dark shadows on the present relationship between two confessions, but we regard the overcoming of ancient problems as going half-way. It is necessary, but it is not sufficient.

In this context we would like to add a point that goes beyond the personal judgement we have on relevance. Parallel to the dialogues, their discussions, results and final statements, runs the question of their reception: what is the effect of all this in church and theology? Generally the question of reception is perceived as problematic⁵⁸⁶. It is seen as problematic for several reasons: a lack of communication, a lack of coherence in the way unity is sought, a lack of authority in the documents. This might be true, but these arguments all have to do with organization within the church and the ecumenical movement. They do not touch on the dialogues themselves. Is there more at stake? Could it also be that the reception of the dialogues, better: the problems concerning reception or maybe even the lack of it, is not only a matter of organization, nor sometimes a matter of ignorance and unwillingness, but also pertain to the dialogues themselves. If all attention is focused on the question how human beings can appropriate salvation, without putting forward an understandable and credible idea of what salvation could actually mean, then we may miss an essential step in the ecumenical discussions. Wouldn't it be more fruitful and adequate in ecumenical dialogues to focus also on the question of relevance and content with regard to soteriology? Wouldn't it be better to include in those dialogues that focus on questions concerning salvation not only results on questions related to the appropriation of salvation and to the criteriological function of any salvific concept, but also to take into account the meaning of salvation itself and what churches belonging to the Christian tradition can say together what it means that the world is offered salvation? It is exactly this concentration on the content of soteriology which could

585 Gassmann/Meyer, *Rechtfertigung im ökumenischen Dialog*, 13, note 11.

586 Cf. Meyer/Gassmann, *Growth in Agreement*, 8.

bring ecumenical dialogues further. So the lack of reception is not only a matter of organization, but also and perhaps primarily a matter of relevance. Apparently it is not enough to overcome the problems of appropriation that are handed over from the past. It is also essential to ask the question: what is it that is appropriated and does it relate to the times and places where it is communicated? Does it relate to those it concerns? What is, as Gassmann and Meyer simply asked in a note, "its current interest and meaning"? Hence, considered from the perspective of reception the question of relevance could be more than only a matter of personal preference.

If bilateral dialogues were to contribute to today's theological discourse, it is inevitable that, with regard to soteriology, not only the question is asked how one gets salvation, but also the question what salvation means, why it plays such an essential role in the Christian traditions and how it relates to other religious and more "worldly" points of view. These questions are part and parcel of the goals of ecumenical dialogue as such. The ecumenical movement does not only bring together what already existed, does not only unite what once was broken apart. The ecumenical movement is also a voyage of discovery, an ongoing encounter with new witnesses of the gospel of Christ in contexts that change all the time⁵⁸⁷. Herman Fiolet, former secretary of the Dutch Council of Churches once put it this way:

I am more and more convinced that in ecumenism it is not about unity of the church, but about renewal of the church... The question of ecumenism is not: how can we bring together the medieval cleft and fissures but: can we create a new, inspiring church from a contemporary encounter of faith? A church that places itself right in the middle of society and takes responsibility for the world.⁵⁸⁸

From this perspective on ecumenism we will go deeper into developments that are related to questions outside the dynamism of an ongoing narrowing in bilateral dialogues. This is done not to deny the results of the dialogues which have their proper value, but to focus on the changing landscape in which the dialogues take place and to ask the question whether the internal dynamism of the dialogues leaves enough room to incorporate results of and developments in the changing (theological) landscape. These results to which we like to point, be it tentatively, are to be found primarily in the field of biblical theology.

First of all we will deal with biblical research. Exegetical and biblical theological studies over the last century show us the wide variety of concepts⁵⁸⁹ of salvation. This certainly has implications for the way churches deal with soteriology and certain concepts which they regard as fundamental. Because the Old Testament way of speaking of salvation is hardly present in ecumenical dialogues we will start with an overview of developments in the understanding of salvation from an Old Testament perspective.

From there we will deal with the New Testament developments. First of all we will give an overview of questions with reference to the interpretation of the place and understanding of Jesus' death. Secondly we will give an overview of what has been said about the variety of New Testament concepts and finally we will go into the question on the place of justification.

In 10.5 we will conclude this study by presenting some final suggestions.

587 Cf. A.W.J. Houtepen, 'Ökumenische Dokumente... und was dann? Die ökumenischen Dialogen und ihre Rezeption vierzig Jahre später', *US* 59 (2004/2) 121 (110 – 124).

588 A.W.J. Houtepen/H. Noordegraaf/M. Bosman-Huizinga (ed), *Waakvlam van de Geest: 40 jaar Raad van Kerken in Nederland*, Zoetermeer (Meinema) 2008, 41.

589 Other refer to 'metaphors', 'notions', 'images', etc.

10.3 The Old Testament

What comes into view immediately on reading ecumenical dialogues is the relatively little attention paid to the Old Testament⁵⁹⁰. It is clear that the inner logic of the bilateral dialogues leaves no room for discussing developments in biblical theology thoroughly. However, the Malta document already noted that, with regard to the concept of the gospel, more intensive attention to the Old Testament was required⁵⁹¹. Therefore it is remarkable that in the dialogues that followed the soteriological notions that are given practically all refer to New Testament citations. The American report *Justification by Faith* is one of the few dialogues that reflects significantly on the Old Testament background of justification. It does so by presenting the Christ-event as a part of salvation history⁵⁹². It regards the history of Israel as a continuing part of the totality of God's single plan of salvation⁵⁹³. Contrary to this, the *Joint Declaration*, pays attention to justification in the Old Testament in two lines by summarizing its meaning rather negatively in terms of disobedience, judgement and God's righteousness. It seems as if the Old Testament is just a record of hope deferred until the coming of a new era⁵⁹⁴.

Although it may seem superfluous to include some of the developments in the Old Testament theology, it is more than a symbolic gesture to do so. For a long period Israel's soteriology was studied exclusively from a Christian systematic perspective, concentrating on questions concerning e.g. original sin, Messiah-predictions or -expectations⁵⁹⁵, salvific universality etc. without asking for the soteriological meaning of the Old Testament itself⁵⁹⁶. Moreover, if Old Testament soteriology was at stake, this was predominantly done in tracing back New Testament concepts. Hence, most studies of the doctrine of salvation begin with the New Testament. But due to a growing interest in Judaism (theology after Auschwitz), to a concern for a less christocentric way of reading the Bible (interreligious dialogue), to liberation theology that referred to Old Testament concepts (Exodus-experience), and to the conviction that the New Testament and the meaning of Jesus' life and appearance can only be understood from the entire biblical perspective (biblical theology), there has been increasing attention given to the 'surplus' (the extra) of the Old Testament, also with regard to its soteriological content.

590 For practical reasons we will use here the expression 'Old Testament', being aware of the delusive connotations the word 'Old' might have.

591 "Further, a full understanding of the concept of gospel requires greater attention to the Old Testament. To be sure, in the present report this concept is in no way limited to the New Testament gospels nor identified with them. Yet a more intensive study of the witness of the Old Testament would lead to further insight" (§ 10).

592 "The God who raised Jesus from the death is the same God who called Abraham to be the father of all who believe, who elected Israel from among all the nations to be his treasured possession and who entered into an enduring covenant with it" (§ 13). And: "It is our common confession that the church is rooted in God's election of Israel as well as being founded in the Christ-event and the proclamation of the gospel by the apostles in the Holy Spirit" (§ 48).

593 Although also in the USA Justification report the Pauline way of understanding justification seems to be the touchstone by which the rest of the New Testament and the Old Testament are measured, cf. Lanooy, 'Towards a Broader Hermeneutics', 157 note 42.

594 Cf. chapter 2.4.

595 Cf. J. Becker, *Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament*, Philadelphia (Fortress) 1980.

596 Lohfink states that the concern with typical Christian systematic ideas "skirted the central facts of Israel's faith..." (30), and did not pay attention to the value of the Old Testament message itself with its concentration on e.g. the Exodus and the end of the Babylonian captivity. "This is the central Old Testament message of salvation. It counts on salvation on earth, on salvation of the bodies (and not only of the souls), with salvation of the people (and not only of the individual)", N. Lohfink, 'Heil als Befreiung in Israel' in: L. Scheffczyk, *Erlösung und Emanzipation*, Quaestiones Disputatae 61, Freiburg (Herder) 1973, 31.

This does not mean that this surplus can easily be presented in a coherent way. The idea that the Old Testament has a significance in itself, is accepted by many Old Testament scholars⁵⁹⁷, but whether this significance should be presented by way of e.g. a Theology of the Old Testament or a History of Religion (*Religionsgeschichte Israels*) is highly debated, in particular in the German oriented theology⁵⁹⁸. And so we see that the soteriological content of the Old Testament is sometimes presented in a broader biblical theological model, sometimes in a more *religionsgeschichtliche* way. It is not the place here to go into this discussion. Our concern is simply to underline the soteriological content of the Old Testament and its meaning for ecumenical dialogues

To this aim, it must be said that in Old Testament theology soteriology does not play an important role. In 1973 J. Barr argued that salvation is not one of the main organizing concepts in modern Old Testament theologies⁵⁹⁹. In his *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* H.-J. Kraus does not refer to 'Salvation', 'Soteriology' or 'Redemption' ('Erlösung') in the Index. And in the discussions about the centre of the Old Testament, salvation (Heil or Erlösung) does not stand at the forefront⁶⁰⁰. Even the question whether one could speak of a possible 'centre' is controversial and under discussion, not only with respect to a possible answer, but also with respect to the question itself. Is it not related to a typical New Testament concern to explain its salvific centre, (life, death and resurrection of Christ)⁶⁰¹?

Nevertheless, it would be bizarre to deny the soteriological content of the Old Testament. In a *religionsgeschichtliche* way this content can be presented in a wide variety of concepts. As Westermann said: "The talk of salvation is multi-faceted throughout the Old Testament"⁶⁰². This variety arises with reference to the circumstances in which the people of Israel or the individual experience salvation. Every situation entailing deprivation demands a new way of experiencing salvation⁶⁰³. Within the setting of the cultus the outlook is different from the setting in which political circumstances play a role, within the apocalyptic setting salvation differs from a hymn that glorifies God's creation. And so the Old Testament tells us about the history of salvation from the very beginning⁶⁰⁴. In the stories of the patriarchs salvation is

597 E.g. in 1972 W. Zimmerli states that it is the Old Testament theology's task "to shed light on the Old Testament way of speaking of God in its inner coherence", W. Zimmerli, *Grundriss der alttestamentlichen Theologie*, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln/Mainz (Kohlhammer) 1972, 9.

598 The publication *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 2 vol., London (SCM) 1994, written by R. Albertz has opened up this discussion again. See also B. Janowski/N. Lohfink (ed), *Religionsgeschichte Israels oder Theologie des Alten Testaments?*, Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie 10, Neukirchen-Vluyn (Neukirchener Verlag) 1995.

599 "In general, among the main currents of Old Testament scholarship in this century the concept of salvation (...) has not been given central prominence in descriptions of the religion" (40), James Barr, 'An aspect of salvation in the Old Testament' in: E.J. Sharpe/J.P. Hinnells (ed), *Man and his Salvation: Studies in Memory of S.G.F. Brandon*, Manchester (Manchester University Press) 1973, 39-52.

600 E.g. covenant, Holiness, Lordship of JHWH, election, theocracy, monotheism are seen as concepts representing the centre of the Old Testament.

601 H.-J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, Neukirchen-Vluyn (Neukirchener Verlag), 1982³, 556.

602 C. Westermann, 'Heilung und Heil in der Gemeinde aus der Sicht des Alten Testaments', *Wege zum Menschen* 27 (1975) 1-12.

603 "One should pay attention to the fact that the saving power of God at the different stages of the history of Israel changes with the different situations, so that the experience of salvation is each time a new one", C. Westermann, *Theologie des Alten Testaments in Grundzügen*, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1985², 30-31.

604 Adrian Schenker, 'Heil und Erlösung II', *TRE* 14, 609-616.

related to individual and communal notions like the promises of offspring, land, people, and the presence of a few just people for the deliverance of the city (Abraham and his blessings). We hear about reconciliation within families and the lack and availability of food (Jacob). Furthermore, we find all kinds of salvific notions in the histories of the Exodus: the Lord saves Israel from oppression in Egypt, hunger and thirst in the desert, it is He who grants Israel forgiveness in response to the pleas of Moses, who provides law and cult for Israel giving them a way of responding to the salvation offered by Him, who leads the people into the promised land. During the period of the kings salvation is expressed in the prosperity of those kings (David, Josiah, including the people and the land) who observe the commandments of God. At the same time eschatological notions appear: the kingdom of David that will last for ever, the Sion-motif. In the prophecies salvation is given 'future'-notions, in particular after 722 (fall of Samaria) and 586 (fall of Jerusalem): the hope of the return of the people of Israel to its land as a new Exodus, the building of a new temple, the beginning of a new era. Also cosmological notions arise: the God of Israel is also the Creator of heaven and earth and all the people will move to Jerusalem as the place of ultimate salvation. Salvation has communal notions (Israel, Jerusalem, the gojim), as well as individual ones; it is experienced within history (Messiah expectations), but it is also something to be hoped for beyond history and creation (resurrection-motive). In the post-exilic stories (Ester, Daniel), God's salvation is to be seen in his hidden guidance and sovereignty in history. Anthropological notions can be recognized in e.g. the psalms in which we see all kinds of individual and communal, religious and political oriented complaints and expressions of gratitude expressed towards God, who grants salvation or is asked to do so in future times, even beyond death. In Job salvation is related to the question of the theodicee, in Proverbs to practical wisdom, in Qohelet to the appeal to enjoy life as a gift of an otherwise hidden God. And finally we see that also apocalyptic notions are part of the Old Testament testimony in which salvation goes beyond the limits of space and time. Complete salvation will involve the re-creation of heaven and earth.

Whether one can form a hierarchy in these Old Testament concepts is open to discussion. Here biblical theology comes into view as we can see in particular in the well-known debate between G. von Rad and C. Westermann concerning the understanding of the centre and significance of the Old Testament. Soteriology is at the heart of that discussion. On the one hand salvation was regarded as 'liberation from...', an act of God in history (Von Rad), on the other hand it was seen as a state of being ('blessing') given by God in creation (Westermann).

It was in particular Von Rad who called attention to the experience of salvation as an act of rescue. In his *Theology of the Old Testament*⁶⁰⁵ he took his starting point in history, laying all emphasis on Scripture as the description by the people of Israel of its liberation experience of the Exodus. According to Von Rad the fundamental creed (the oldest one in Scripture) of Deuteronomy 26,5-9 shows in a nutshell the different traditions (those of the patriarchs, the exodus and the gift of the promised land), linked together with this experience as a history of salvation⁶⁰⁶. God delivered Israel from bondage, preserved it in the wilderness, settled it in Canaan. It is this fundamental salvific act which made the relationship between God and his people a steadfast one⁶⁰⁷. The liberation from slavery in Egypt is the basic experience of the people of Israel. Salvation is an act of God out of compassion with his suffering people.

605 G. Von Rad, *Theologie des alten Testaments: Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels* (vol. I) and: *Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels*, (vol.II) München (Kaiser Verlag) 1982⁸.

606 Von Rad, *Theologie* (vol. I), 135-136.

607 "The act of salvation that stood at the base of the relationship between God and his people", Westermann, 'Heilung und Heil in der Gemeinde,' 11.

The emphasis that Von Rad laid on salvation as concrete liberation had a profound influence. For some years salvation from an Old Testament perspective, even salvation *tout court*, for many theologians was identical to God's liberation of his people in history. It was no coincidence that Liberation Theology was highly indebted to the theology of Von Rad. It regarded Exodus as the proto-model (*Ur-modell*) of liberation, in particular by reason of its worldliness, *Diesseitigkeit* and its relevance in politics and society⁶⁰⁸.

As a reaction to Von Rad's view on salvation as historical liberation⁶⁰⁹, it was Westermann in particular who laid stress on another Old Testament aspect of salvation. Westermann affirmed that not only history but also creation plays an important role in the Old Testament. Salvation in history presupposes a basic religious experience in which the cosmos as creation is the place which God cares about, in which God provides for his creatures. "When the theology and the preaching of the Church are concerned only with salvation, (in the sense of 'Rettung', RL) when God's dealing with man is limited to the forgiveness of sins or to justification, the necessary consequence is that it is only in this context that man has to deal with God and God with man... What sort of God is he who does everything for the salvation of man but clearly has nothing at all to do with man in his life situation"⁶¹⁰. Salvation in the Old Testament is more than redemption, liberation, deliverance. It also contains the idea of 'shalom', the wholeness of the people and the individual, "the wholeness of human existence in every way possible"⁶¹¹. Hence, according to Westermann the Old Testament discerns two ways of God's action towards humanity: saving and blessing. God's saving (in the sense of 'rescuing') actions of both his people and individuals underline a special, temporary (*Augenblickhaft*) action and this pre-supposes a special situation of need and distress. God's blessing refers to a normal, everyday situation, a permanent condition of wellness.

These two biblical theological lines (salvation as specific liberation on the one hand and as general blessing on the other) come together in B. Janowski's book *Rettungsgewissheit und Epiphanie des Heils*⁶¹² in which he describes the motive of God's deliverance at dawn as an Old Testament (and elsewhere in the Ancient Orient present) soteriological concept in which nature and revelation, creation and history are related. The sunrise at dawn is not just the natural change from the night of chaos towards the day of creation, but it is directly related to those people in distress who hope for salvation⁶¹³. In the Old Testament (Lamentations 3,23) there is a direct relation between natural happenings and God's saving action throughout history. The world is not a harmonious entity. During the night, but also at critical moments in

608 "It was appropriate that Liberation Theology protested against a problematic understanding of salvation... that dominates in the Christianity that has been alienated from the Old Testament", Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Forschung des Alten Testaments*, 560.

609 Von Rad himself nuanced his emphasis on history as the only way in which the Old Testament describes salvation: "...with the reference to the relevance of history is the understanding of the world in Old Testament Israel not by any means exhausted and determined. The large field of all those statements which we describe as referring to 'Nature' has still not been touched", G. von Rad, 'Aspekte alttestamentlichen Weltverständnisses', *EvTh* 24 (1964) 65.

610 C. Westermann, 'Biblical Reflection on Creator-Creation' in: B.W. Anderson (ed), *Creation in the Old Testament*, Issues in Religion and Theology 6, London (SPCK) 1984, 92.

611 C. Westermann, 'Der Frieden (shalom) im Alten Testament' in: *Forschung am Alten Testament: Gesammelte Studien II*, München (Kaiser) 1974, 226.

612 B. Janowski, *Rettungsgewissheit und Epiphanie des Heils: Das Motiv der Hilfe Gottes 'am Morgen' im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, Neukirchen-Vluyn (Neukirchener Verlag) 1989.

613 "The morning sunrise does not only mark the cosmic transition from the 'night of chaos' to the 'day of creation', it also awakens in the praying being who is threatened by sickness, enmity or injustice the hope of rescue from (the fate of) death", Janowski, *Rettungsgewissheit und Epiphanie des Heils*, 29.

life (illness, danger of enemies, fear of death), it can perish in a well of chaos. But every new day it is liberated from the powers of chaos and renewed according to God's creative will.

What does this mean for the ecumenical dialogues and their soteriological content? First of all it means that attention to the soteriological content of the Old Testament opens up a broader view of what salvation means. This 'extra' refers to, for example, the historical, political, economical, natural side of human life, not only individually, but it refers in particular to the community (land, nation, people), to the *Diesseitigkeit* of salvation, to its material side, and to the idea that salvation is more than 'something' that has to do with sin⁶¹⁴. The surplus is rooted in the experience that salvation is not just an aspect of the God of Israel, but the expression of his being. So, from the outset, salvation is seen as a gift of God, that cannot be separated from the giver. It is the Eternal who presents himself to his people in his salvific gifts.

Hence, secondly, when God reveals himself this is always a concrete salvific revelation in history. Therefore in the Old Testament we encounter so many different salvific experiences. All these different concrete experiences lead to a wide variety of Old Testament soteriological concepts that have a meaning in themselves, but they are also indispensable for the understanding of New Testament concepts. It is Luke who relates that Jesus explains to the men of Emmaus the meaning of his life, death and resurrection by referring to the Hebrew Bible (Lk. 24,27). And in the same way Pauline letters and the New Testament Scripture in general refer to the Old Testament as the foundation of the salvific Christ event.

If bilateral dialogues were to pay more attention to the meaning of salvation, it is inevitable that they would begin by referring to the Old Testament.

10.4 The New Testament

Contrary to the rather lack of attention paid to the Old Testament in the ecumenical dialogues, we find a wide variety of references to New Testament texts with regard to soteriology. It is of prime importance that in the ecumenical dialogues the variety of soteriological concepts is recognized. We have seen that this was the case in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue⁶¹⁵ as well as in the ARCIC dialogues. Nevertheless, we have also seen that in a number of dialogues the concept of 'justification' is regarded as of first importance among the others (*Joint Declaration* § 9) or at least that it is discussed in what sense it is first among the others. Here we touch upon the problem we mentioned before: the discrepancy between the different

614 Lohfink, 'Heil als Befreiung in Israël', 31. Or Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Forschung des Alten Testaments*, 560: "History and creation as they are witnessed in the Old Testament open the dimensions of a new worldliness and *Diesseitigkeit* with every consequence for social and political life".

615 The *Malta Report* states that "the event of salvation to which the gospel testifies can also be expressed comprehensively in other representations derived from the New Testament, such as reconciliation, freedom, redemption, new life and new creation (§ 27)". *Justification by Faith* declares that biblical theological findings resulted in the conclusion that the "biblical witness to the gospel of God's saving work in Christ is richer and more varied than has been encompassed in either traditional Catholic or Lutheran approaches to justification (§ 149)". The *Joint Declaration* is less explicit and limits its reference to an overview of Paul's letters stating that "in Paul's letters also, the gift of salvation is described in various ways, among others: "for freedom God has set us free"..., "reconciled to God"..., "peace with God"..., "new creation"..., "alive to God in Jesus Christ"..., or "sanctified in Jesus Christ"... Chief among these is the "justification" of sinful human beings by God's grace through faith (Rom 3,23-25), which came into particular prominence in the Reformation period)."

levels on which salvation is discussed, in particular the friction between the dogmatic position 'justification' has in e.g. the Lutheran confession⁶¹⁶ and the exegetical-hermeneutical level where this position of justification is under discussion⁶¹⁷. It is not easy to separate these levels, in particular in the condensed texts of the dialogues, but it is clear that the dogmatic level is more important than the exegetical-hermeneutical level⁶¹⁸. Therefore, we go, in what follows, deeper into this exegetical-hermeneutical level, as a possible completion of and correction of the dialogues.

1. The place and understanding of Jesus' death

First of all we will look at some of the exegetical developments in the understanding of Jesus' death and its (non)salvific interpretations. Within ecumenical dialogues Jesus' death is often regarded as the main event that brings about salvation. Whether this is true or not is widely discussed by New Testament scholars. Many of them nowadays are convinced that Jesus himself did not regard his death as the central event that would bring salvation. In 1972 H. Kessler wrote that Jesus did not regard his death as sacrifice, satisfaction or redemption because he did not consider his death as such as salvific event⁶¹⁹. Others before him, like Von Harnack, Wrede had taken a similar position. Bultmann considered the passion predictions to be *vaticinia ex eventu*⁶²⁰ and called the concepts concerning Jesus' death 'primitive mythology'⁶²¹. This view was differentiated by other scholars: over the course of his public life Jesus must have foreseen the approach of his death as a possible or even inevitable consequence of his words and deeds⁶²². Stuhlmacher, in a discussion on the meaning of the 'Ebed-JHWH Songs', disagrees with this *communis opinio* by stating that the earthly Jesus understood his life and death in the light of the Isaiah tradition of the "substitutionarily suffering servant of God". Jesus regarded his passion as the eventuality in which he fulfilled God's purpose⁶²³. However, generally spoken, New Testament scholars are very reluctant to

616 "The Lutheran tradition took over this high status of justification up to the 20th century and it is also strongly noticeable among all the 'evangelischen' (Protestant, RL) exegetes in their interpretation of Paul", M. Görtler, *Gottes geoffenbarte Heilstat in Jesus Christus: Zum Stellenwert der paulinischen Rechtfertigungsaussagen im Kontext der katholisch-lutherischen Konsensfindung*, Saarbrücken (VDM Publishing) 2008, 2.

617 "The two aspects can hardly be separated completely, especially as the majority of those taking part in the exegetical discussion must themselves have been positively or negatively influenced by a form of Christian preaching or piety determined by these motives, and conversely they also formulate their exegetical considerations at least on a basis of a present-day responsibility for Christian traditions.", J. Frey, 'Probleme der Deutung des Todes Jesu' in: J. Frey/J. Schröter (ed), *Deutungen des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament*, WUNT 181, Tübingen (Mohr Siebeck) 2005, 6.

618 Cf. the first lines of the *Joint Declaration*: "The doctrine of justification was of central importance for the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century".

619 H. Kessler, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Düsseldorf (Patmos Verlag) 1971².

620 Cf. R. Bultmann, 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus' in: C. Braaten/R. Harrisville (ed), *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, Nashville (Abindon) 1964, 23-24.

621 R. Bultmann, 'Neues Testament und Mythologie' in: H.-W. Bartsch (ed), *Kerygma und Mythos I: Ein theologisches Gespräch*, Hamburg-Bergstedt (Reich) 1967⁵.

622 So R. Schnackenburg in: K. Kertelge, (ed), *Der Tod Jesu: Deutungen im Neuen Testament*, Quaestiones Disputatae 74, Freiburg (Herder) 1982. Brown states that "in the last days of his life in Jerusalem as the leaders of his people showed unremitting hostility... Jesus would have struggled in prayer with God about how his death fitted into the inbreaking of God's kingdom is, in my judgement, so extremely plausible as to warrant certainty", R. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave*, vol. 2, New York (Doubleday) 1994, 1234. For an account of the major positions cf. J.P. Galvin, 'Jesus' Approach to Death: An Examination of Some Recent Studies', *TS* 41 (1980) 713-744.

623 P. Stuhlmacher, 'Jes 53 in den Evangelien und in der Apostelgeschichte', in: B. Janowski/P. Stuhlmacher (ed), *Der leidende Gottesknecht: Jesaja 53 und seine Wirkungsgeschichte*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 14, Tuebingen (Mohr/Siebeck) 1996, 98 (93-105).

state that Jesus saw his death not only as the inevitable result of his message but also as part, if not the heart, of his message⁶²⁴. The gospels tend to show us that Jesus' message of salvation was first and foremost a message of the coming or the proximity of the Kingdom of God. It is clear that historical research cannot give us the final answer on Jesus' own view of his death. That he saw his death both as a catastrophe and as the ultimate consequence of his life and work and in this sense as voluntary seems to be the most one can say.

The lack of historical evidence, which hinders us in concluding with certainty or even probability that Jesus regarded his death as salvific event, accounts as well for his disciples. The gospels, including John, show us the disciples as a group fallen into a deep crisis after Jesus' death and it is not unreasonable to suppose that this view has roots in history. The cross destroyed all their expectations and views of the coming Kingdom. Thus the salvific character of Jesus' death has been by no means evident from the very beginning. On the contrary, one could imagine that it questioned their faith in Jesus as envoy, sent by God for the salvation of Israel, experienced in faith, healing forgiveness, exorcism, community. In fact, it was the resurrection from death that turned out to be the starting-point for further reflection on the meaning of Jesus' death. One could imagine that Jesus' disciples had to come to terms with the cross apparently not being the dreadful end of the sincere life of a benevolent man, but in fact being part of God's plan to bring his kingdom into the world.

The New Testament contains the aftermath of this reflection. It is beyond doubt that many parts of the New Testament are related to the cross and the death of Jesus, although this is not everywhere the case⁶²⁵. The attention to Jesus' death is already paid at the very beginning of Christianity. However, as M. de Jonge wrote, this did not automatically lead to a soteriological interpretation of Jesus' death or to the assumption that salvation is to be understood particularly or even only in the light of the cross. In traditional material found in Paul, Q and Mark he discerns three conceptions: (1) Jesus as final envoy of God, rejected by

624 M. de Jonge, *Jesus, the Servant-Messiah*, London (Yale University Press) 1991, speaks carefully of Jesus considering his death as "that of God's final envoy to Israel", or as "an obedient suffering servant who would be vindicated by God". When it comes to Jesus giving a real meaning to his death De Jonge says: "It is impossible to say with certainty whether Jesus regarded his death as a dying for others" (54). Nevertheless he assumes some continuity in what Jesus did and said before he died and the early Christian kerygma centering around his death and resurrection. "The Proclaimer became the Proclaimed because of the very nature of his proclamation" (81). N.A. Dahl, 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus' in: *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays*, Minneapolis (Augsburg) 48-89, considers it probable that Jesus ascribed a certain vicarious significance to his death necessary for the coming of the Kingdom of God (75). According to the exegetical data Karl Rahner leaves open the question "whether and to what extent and in what sense the pre-resurrection Jesus explicitly ascribed a soteriological function to his death", concluding that the interpretation of the crucifixion on Jesus' part is not of great importance for systematic theology, K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, New York (Crossroad) 1982, 248-249.

625 Some of the early Christian hymns show a marginal interest for Jesus' death or for a potential positive meaning: 1 Tim. 3,16 does not mention Jesus' death at all and the original versions of the hymns of Phil. 2,6-11 and Col. 1,15-20 do not ascribe any meaning to Jesus' death. Furthermore we can discern tendencies that some of Jesus followers who believed in him as coming from God do not connect salvation with his death. They were in particular attracted by his salvific words and works and for some of his followers the essence of the experienced salvation is related to his life and his proclamation of the kingdom of God (cf. G. Dautzenberg, 'Reich Gottes und Erlösung' in: I. Broer/J. Werbick (ed), *"Auf Hoffnung hin sind wir erlöst"* (Rom 8,24): *Biblische und systematische Beiträge zum Erlösungsverständnis heute*, Stuttgart (Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk) 1987, 43-66), to his healings (W. Schrage, 'Heil und Heilung im Neuen Testament', in: Broer/Werbick (ed), *Auf Hoffnung hin sind wir erlöst*, 95-117) or to his attention to or even option for the poor and distressed, and not to his death.

Israel⁶²⁶; (2) Jesus and the tradition of God's suffering servants⁶²⁷; (3) Jesus, the man who died for others⁶²⁸. This differentiation makes clear that from the beginning not all interpretations of Jesus' death had soteriological character⁶²⁹. Jesus' death as the ultimate consequence of his message, reflected in several texts in the New Testament⁶³⁰, presents an interpretation in line with the Old Testament tradition of the persecuted prophets that does not attach a meaning to his death, let alone a soteriological one. In some early Christian circles the tradition of the death of the final envoy, as such considered negatively, is linked to a certain kind of vindication and the death of Jesus is combined with a resurrection formula. In Luke-Acts the so called 'contrast-pattern' or 'reversal-scheme' on Jesus' death and his resurrection, - 'humans crucified Jesus, but God vindicated him'⁶³¹ - refers to a layer of tradition consisting of two different interpretations of respectively Jesus' death and his resurrection, which are combined by Luke or a former tradition. Here Jesus' death is attributed totally to human responsibility and is not connected with an explicit soteriological interpretation⁶³². The conclusion that Luke-Acts therefore lacks any soteriological interpretation of Jesus' death, or of Jesus anyhow, - in clear contrast to Paul⁶³³ -, is often drawn but questionable⁶³⁴. Nevertheless, if

626 M. de Jonge, *Christology in Context: The Earliest Christian Response to Jesus*, Philadelphia (The Westminster Press) 1988, 35 and 174 and De Jonge, *Jesus, the Servant-Messiah*, 32-48.

627 De Jonge, *Christology in Context*, 175.

628 De Jonge, *Christology in Context*, 179.

629 Cf. also G. Friedrich, *Die Verkündigung des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament*, Theologische Studien 6, Neukirchen-Vluyn (Neukirchener Verlag) 1982, 14-21.

630 De Jonge mentions 1 Thess 2,14-16 and Q texts Luke 11,49-51; 13,34-35; cf. also Friedrich, *Verkündigung*, 14.

631 Acts 2,23-24; 3,13-15; 4,10; 5,30; 10,39-40; 13,27-31.

632 "The most important conclusion for us in this connection is that neither any kind of Passion-mysticism is noticeable nor is there a direct message of salvation through suffering and death set out. A connection with the forgiveness of sins is not established", H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 17, Tübingen (J.C.B. Mohr) 1964⁵, 187. Cf. also J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought*, Edinburgh (T & T Clark) 1989, paperback ed. with new Preface, 202-203, where he states that "nowhere does it (Luke-Acts, RL) ascribe atoning significance to Jesus' death". Cf. also G. Barth, *Der Tod Jesu Christi im Verständnis des Neuen Testaments*, Neukirchen-Vluyn (Neukirchener Verlag) 1992, 131-138; J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, New York (Doubleday Religious Publishing Group) 1995, 219-220; also P.W. van der Horst, 'Geen ander evangelie: Notities over verdeeldheid in het oudste christendom' in: A.W.J. Houtepen (ed), *Breekpunten en keerpunten: Beslissende historische momenten en factoren in het oecumenisch proces*, IIMO Research Publication 27, Utrecht/Leiden (IIMO) 1989, 55. J.D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, London (SCM Press) 1977, 17-18 and Friedrich, *Verkündigung*, 20-21.

633 Cf. the discussion on the interpretation of Luke-Acts over against Paul in: U. Wilckens, 'Interpreting Luke-Acts in a Period of Existentialist Theology' in: L.E. Keck/J.L. Martyn (ed), *Studies in Luke-Acts*, London (SPCK) 1966, 60-83.

634 Cf. R. Glöckner, *Die Verkündigung des Heils beim evangelisten Lukas*, Walberberger Studien 9, Mainz (Matthias-Grünwald Verlag), 1975, 96-113. Glöckner gives an overview of the discussion on Luke's soteriology quoting, for example, Haenchen who speaks of a 'soteriological gap' ('das soteriologische Loch') (103) and Wilckens: "The death of Jesus carries with it no saving grace, and hence Luke's Christology is lacking entirely in any soteriological content" (103). Glöckner himself holds that there are "indications that Luke can in fact preach a soteriology which has content, which on the one hand centres on the suffering of Christ, without making it the one and only 'how' and 'in this way of redemption on the other", 113. Cf. also M. Hengel, 'The Atonement', in: Martin Hengel, *The Cross of the Son of God*, London (SCM Press) 1986, 222 and 259, who speaks of "Luke's unique restraint over against a soteriological interpretation of the death of Jesus", however, he does not conclude that Luke (or the synoptic Gospels) is unaware of a soteriological interpretation of Jesus' death. Cf. also A.J. Hultgren, *Christ and His Benefits: Christology and Redemption in the New Testament*, Philadelphia (Fortress) 1987. He states that the absence of an atoning interpretation of Jesus' death does not mean that there is not at all a soteriological interpretation attached to cross and resurrection. "It does not follow that wherever an interpretation of the death of Jesus as an atoning (i.e., sin-bearing) event is lacking there is no redemptive significance attached to the cross and resurrection (23). Jesus' death is part of the complex of events which is the foundation of salvation, "for none of the events within the

Jesus' death is not the main event in God's plan of salvation, it is a part of it⁶³⁵. The cross is part of God's salvific plan, but at the same time it is not its exclusive or most important content.

Next to those New Testament traditions that show a certain negligence of Jesus' death and interpretations that do not attach a positive meaning to it, the New Testament shows tendencies as well that relate possible salvific aspects to Jesus' death right from the beginning of Christianity⁶³⁶. If Jesus was sent by God to bring salvation, it was the whole of his life, death and resurrection that must have had a salvific character, or, more concentrated, precisely his death must have been the place of soteriological importance. The cross is not an object of contrast or a sign of discontinuity, but fits well into the whole history of Jesus. If Easter means more than a correction of an 'accident', than the accident too might have a deeper significance⁶³⁷. Hence, there is no doubt that in the *corpus Paulinum* the proclamation of Jesus' death belongs to the basic features of the gospel. In what sense, however, Jesus' death induces salvation is since long under discussion. In particular the letters of Paul give rise to a wide variety of interpretations how Paul understands Jesus' death. But not only do they do so, other parts of the New Testament parts give rise to discussion as well. In the gospel of Mark, for example, the passion and death of Jesus is of great significance. However there is no unanimity on the question whether Mark attaches a soteriological meaning to Jesus' death, or not⁶³⁸.

2. The variety of New Testament concepts

It is hard to say what happened first: did exegetical developments lead to the ecumenical receptivity for the wide variety of concepts that describe the content of salvation in the New Testament⁶³⁹ or did ecumenical developments cause the growing attention to this variety in exegesis? Anyhow, it is without doubt that in many ecumenical dialogues this variety is

complex is itself the decisive, redemptive act" (86). Salvation, thus, is not to be linked to an objective fact, e.g., Jesus' death on the cross as the ultimate saving event and saving moment, but to the totality of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and exaltation. G. Barth is clearer in his opinion when he argues that Luke values Jesus' death in an ethical not in a soteriological way and thus underestimates the soteriological relevance of the cross (G. Barth, *Der Tod Jesu Christi*, 138). R. Zehnle has tried to demonstrate the opposite in 'The Salvific Character of Jesus' Death in Lucan Soteriology', *TS* 30 (1969) 420-444. See also: G.J. Steyn, 'Soteriological Perspectives in Lukes Gospel', in J.G. van der Watt (ed), *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 121, Leiden/Boston (Brill) 2005, 67-99. It is noteworthy that the words 'salvation' and 'Saviour' belong to the favourite words of Luke (cf. De Jonge, *Christology*, 102) and, compared to the other evangelists, are most frequently used in the gospel of Luke, Glöckner, *Verkündigung des Heils*, 93.

635 Barth, *Der Tod Jesu Christi*, 132.

636 Cf. Hengel, 'The Atonement', 189-192 and further about the discussion on the origins of this soteriological interpretation.

637 Friedrich, *Verkündigung*, 32.

638 "It is therefore not possible to say that Mark understands Jesus' passion above all or even only as the suffering of the just man and drags along with this, in a way almost out of necessity, the statement about 'a ransom for many' in 10,45 and 14,24 only as tradition. Rather he not only accepted these statements, but also independently emphasized and underlined them: exactly in this way is Jesus the Saviour, that he suffers and dies for the sins of the many", G. Barth, *Der Tod Jesu Christi*, 131. Contrary to this opinion J.S. Vos writes: "The evangelist knows of the soteriological interpretation of the death of Jesus, but this gets little depth. Therefore one cannot say that this functions as one of the central points of his gospel", J.S. Vos, 'Vragen rondom de plaatsvervangende zoendood van Jezus in het Nieuwe Testament', *GTT* 93 (1993) 215.

639 Like Eugene Honée correctly asks whether an ecumenical way of doing church history, as has been undertaken in the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, is the cause or the consequence of the growing ecumenical consciousness, Honée, 'The Function of Church History in the Ecumenical Dialogue', 16-32.

accepted. It is generally agreed that the New Testament presents a wide range of concepts (also called: images, metaphors, concepts, theories or paradigms). They are all efforts to interpret the experience of salvation through Jesus⁶⁴⁰.

Many scholars have tried to sum up and classify these concepts of salvation. The way the listing and classification is done depends to a large extent on the point of departure of the scholar. Many New Testament scholars take their starting point in reflecting on the concepts concerning Jesus' death. It is clear that exegetical-hermeneutical, dogmatical and homiletical questions and hesitations concerning the salvific meaning of Jesus' death play a major role here. How can the death of Jesus have a meaningful place within God's plan? The concepts, set forth in important parts, but not in the whole of the New Testament, show as large a variation as do the attempts to describe them.

Although Bultmann certainly was not the first to do so, his studies were influential in the growing acceptance of a wide diversity of concepts of Jesus' death. In his *Theology of the New Testament* he discerned five concepts with their own terminology originating in different backgrounds: (1) expiatory sacrifice (2) vicarious sacrifice (3) ransom (4) the sacramental participation in the death and resurrection of Christ and (5) categories of Gnostic mysticism⁶⁴¹. Nowadays Bultmann's classification is under discussion⁶⁴², but the death of Jesus, is still an important starting point in New Testament theology. Scholars like H. Kessler⁶⁴³, G. Barth⁶⁴⁴, M.D. Hooker⁶⁴⁵, G. Friedrich⁶⁴⁶, K. Kertelge⁶⁴⁷ take the whole of the New Testament as their field of research. Others, like R.H. Fuller⁶⁴⁸, E. Käsemann⁶⁴⁹, J.A.

640 "A rich conceptuality describes the newly experienced reality of salvation", E. Larsson, 'Heil und Erlösung', *TRE* 14, 616; "There is no single New Testament doctrine of the Atonement - there is simply a collection of images and metaphors with some preliminary analysis and reflection from which subsequent tradition built its systematic doctrines and theories", W.J. Wolf, 'Atonement', *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York (MacMillan) 1987, 496; "The New Testament also describes salvation in a variety of images", U. Kühn, 'Salvation', *DEM*, 893. "But the Gospels insist that his salvific effect on us is as various as the way the total reality of him bears upon our lives", so P.J. Achtemeier, 'The Ministry of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels', *Interpretation* 35/2 (1981) 157.

641 R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Volume 1, Waco (Baylor University Press) 2007, 292-305.

642 Barth, *Der Tod Jesu Christi*, 24.

643 Kessler, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu*, 1971².

644 Barth starts his book *Der Tod Jesu Christi* by stating that "Christianity claims indeed that this death is the central point of God's saving grace. It preaches this death as the salvation of the world, as the event, which can change the life of every man or woman for good or evil, blessing or curse, meaning or meaninglessness" (1). Barth mentions nine models from which six are concepts of Jesus' death which attribute a soteriological meaning to it: Jesus' death as vicarious expiation, as redemption, as an event to participate in, as victory over the powers of death, as revelation of God's love and as example. Three are attempts to give Jesus' death a place in the course of events, without claiming a soteriological content: Jesus' death as part of God's work, as the death of the suffering righteous person and as the prophet's fate.

645 M.D. Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ*, Carlisle (Paternoster) 1994 considers the different New Testament books and refers to the synoptic or (pre/deutero/post-)Pauline concepts starting her book by stating that: "there is no doubt that the death of Jesus lies at the heart of the Christian gospel, and therefore of the New Testament" (7).

646 Friedrich, *Die Verkündigung*. Friedrich describes eleven concepts of Jesus' death, all of them regarding a soteriological content.

647 K. Kertelge, *Der Tod Jesu*

648 R.H. Fuller, 'Jesus Christ as Saviour in the New Testament', *Interpretation* 35/2 (1981) 145-156. His starting point is that "the New Testament has many doctrines of salvation through Jesus Christ, but all of them tie this salvation to the cross", 145. Fuller presents five (deutero)Pauline concepts: reconciliation, victory, reconciliation, victory and sacrifice.

649 E. Käsemann, 'The Saving Significance of the Death of Jesus' in: *Perspectives on Paul*, Philadelphia (Fortress) 1977, 32-59.

Fitzmyer⁶⁵⁰ or J.D.G. Dunn⁶⁵¹ focus on parts of the New Testament, e.g. Pauline interpretations. In particular the question in what sense Jesus' death can be regarded as a sacrifice⁶⁵², its relationship to Old Testament Scriptures, the interpretation of Romans 3,24-25⁶⁵³, the different aspects of expiation and propitiation, etc. have given rise to much discussion, in which exegetical and systematical arguments are not easy to discern.

The method of starting with the soteriological meaning of Jesus' death already gives insight into a large variety of New Testament concepts, as we have demonstrated before. However, this does not cover the whole of this variety of interpretations. The particularity of this approach is that the principal question behind it is not the question what salvation means, but how Jesus' death and salvation are related in the New Testament and eventually can be related in our time. This is not an unimportant question but, as we have seen, it is by no way unambiguous that all New Testament-authors attribute a salvific meaning to Jesus' death. Starting point for the New Testament authors seems to be their experience of salvation in faith, determined by all that had happened through and to Jesus of Nazareth, the totality of his life, death and resurrection. If we focus too much on the way how Jesus' death can be salvific, we do not do justice to the New Testament itself, which reflects a reverse way of thinking. Even if the cross plays a fundamental role e.g. in the letters of Paul, this is not because for Paul Jesus' death had been the principal source of salvation right from the beginning, but because his experience of salvation had to come to terms with the cross. He did not think from the cross to salvation, but from salvation to the cross, and thus he came to the conviction that the cross as 'foolishness' was a salvific 'tool' in the hand of God⁶⁵⁴. For Paul it was all about Jesus. We can put it sharply with the title of a book of H.-E. Mertens: *Not the cross, but the Crucified*⁶⁵⁵.

So we see, next to authors who make their starting point the explanation of the meaning of Jesus' death, other scholars that take their point of departure in the soteriological concepts themselves. When we look at those attempts, we again meet the overall observation that the New Testament contains a wide variety of concepts and again we also see a great diversity in the way scholars have assessed the meaning and number of concepts and their classification. E. Schillebeeckx discerns for the whole of the New Testament sixteen 'interpretaments' for salvation⁶⁵⁶. J. Gnalka assembles the New Testament soteriological concepts under five

650 J.A. Fitzmyer, 'Reconciliation in Pauline Theology' in: J.A. Fitzmyer, *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies*, New York (Crossroad) 1981, 163-164. Fitzmyer counts "at least nine" (163) what he calls 'abstractions'.

651 J.D.G. Dunn, 'Paul's understanding of the death of Jesus' in: S.W. Sykes (ed), *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1991, 35-56.

652 "Die Heilsbedeutung des Kreuzes wird im Neuen Testament mittels der Kategorie des Opfers ausgesagt, und zwar nicht auf eine, sondern... auf differenzierte Weise"... "Wird mit dem Opfertod Jesu das Interpretandum aller Soteriologischen Aussagen oder ein Soteriologisches Interpretaments unter anderen zur Sprache gebracht?", I.U. Dalferth, 'Die Soteriologische Relevanz der Kategorie des Opfers' in: Ingo Baldermann et al. (ed), *Altes Testament und christliche Glaube*, Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie 6, Neukirche-Vluyn (Neukirchener Verlag) 1991, 178-179.

653 cf. J. Piper, 'The Demonstration of the Righteousness of God in Romans 3.25,26' in: S.E. Porter/C.A. Evans (ed), *The Pauline Writings*; The Biblical Seminar 34, Sheffield (Academic Press) 1995, 175-202 and D.A. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21-26*, Sheffield (JSOT Press) 1992.

654 "Before Paul, the cross of Jesus formed the question which was answered by the message of the resurrection. The apostle decisively reversed the way of looking at things", E. Käsemann, 'The Saving Significance', 57.

655 H.-E. Mertens, *Niet het kruis, maar de Gekruisigde: Schets van een christelijke bevrijdingsleer*, Nikè-reeks: Didachè, Leuven/Amersfoort (Acco) 1990.

656 He mentions: salvation, alienation/freedom from slavery, redemption, reconciliation, satisfaction/peace, expiation, forgiveness, justification, sanctification, intercession, communion, love, liberation, renewal, life, victory, E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World*, London (SCM Press) 1990,

headings: to save (soozein), to redeem (lytrousthai), to ransom (agorazein), to release (eleutheroun), to reconcile (katallassein). Others confine themselves to fields of concepts, or to one concept. J. Werbick⁶⁵⁷ discerns three fields: Victory over powers, saving relationship and healing participation, and expiation. I.U. Dalferth speaks of three frameworks, these being the legal framework, that of the power struggle and thirdly a cultic framework⁶⁵⁸. M. Root⁶⁵⁹ departs from the biblical understanding of evil and distinguishes between two groups. In the first evil (death) is regarded as "something humanity undergoes, suffers rather than commits"⁶⁶⁰, thus salvation means liberation (in all its images). In the second group evil is an act undertaken by humanity. Here death is not a personified power, which captors humanity, but the moral consequence of its acts. Salvation here means reconciliation. Furthermore, theologians like H. Kessler⁶⁶¹, W.M. Müller⁶⁶², W. Schrage⁶⁶³, G. Dautzenberg⁶⁶⁴, J.A. Fitzmyer⁶⁶⁵ elaborate other particular concepts in the New Testament, like the Kingdom of God, Salvation and Healing, Childhood, or Reconciliation. One of the most commented ones is without doubt that of justification as we have shown before.

Again others focus on a particular corpus of texts, like the Paulinean or the synoptical. Mertens discerns seven concepts in Paul's letters⁶⁶⁶. In his instructive article 'Soteriologische Symbolik in den Paulinischen Schriften'⁶⁶⁷ G. Theissen shows that in his letters Paul uses several concepts to proclaim the gospel of salvation. Every concept has its proper symbolic structure and its terminology is taken from ordinary life. He discerns: liberation, justification, reconciliation (*sociomorphical symbolism of interaction*), and transformation, death and life, communion (*physiomorphical symbolism of change*). These symbolic structures have a certain inner logic, and are interrelated. The sociomorphical symbolism of interaction shows a process of salvation in which the saviour acts towards humanity, which is the 'addressee'. Here the human being is chiefly object of salvation. The physiomorphical symbolism of change formulates the response that the human being is not only 'receiver' but does also participate, he transcends the *conditio humana* and forms a union with the saviour. Noteworthy here is that in some of the structures Jesus' death plays a role (in different ways), but not in all of them. As they do not distinguish between the so-called objective (the Christ-event) and subjective salvation (its 'effect' for humanity), it seems that the Christ-event is broader than e.g. Jesus' death, because there are salvific elements for Paul that cannot be related to Jesus' death but to other aspects, in particular the mythological and cosmological ways of speaking about Christ. Their inner logic varies, due to the circumstances in and intentions with which Paul writes his letters. So we see e.g. in the case of justification, which is a symbolism that

478ff.

657 'Sieg über die Mächte', 'rettende Beziehung und heilende Teilhabe', and 'Sühne', J. Werbick, *Soteriologie*, Düsseldorf (Patmos) 1990.

658 I.U. Dalferth, 'Christ died for us' in: S.W. Sykes (ed), *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1991, 310.

659 M. Root, 'Dying He Lives: Biblical Image, Biblical Narrative, and The Redemptive Jesus' in: R. Jewett, *Christology and Exegesis: New Approaches*, Semeia 30, Decatur/GA (Society of Biblical Literature) 1985, 156.

660 Root, *Dying He Lives*, 156.

661 Kessler, *Erlösung als Befreiung*.

662 W.M. Müller, "Gotteskindschaft als paradigma neutestamentlicher Rede vom Heil des Menschen unter den Bedingung der Neuzeit", *ZKTh* 117 (1995) 59-67.

663 Schrage, 'Heil und Heilung im Neuen Testament'.

664 Dautzenberg, 'Reich Gottes und Erlösung'.

665 Fitzmyer, 'Reconciliation in Pauline Theology', 163-164.

666 Mertens, *Niet het kruis, maar de Gekruisigde*. Mertens mentions redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, liberation, peace, salvation, sacrifice.

667 G. Theissen, 'Soteriologische Symbolik in den paulinischen Schriften: Ein strukturalistischer Beitrag', *KuD* 20 (1974) 282-304.

deals with guilt, that Jesus' death as a curse' plays a central role in the shift from evil (*Unheil*) to salvation (*Heil*). In the symbolism of (comm)union (*Vereinigungssymbolik*) however, Jesus' death plays a limited role, not because Paul has radically changed his point of view, but because he is pointing to a different aspect: salvation as victory over separation and isolation (*Eingeschlossenheit*). In Christ the flesh (*sarx*) is transcended and the human being is 'one in Christ'. The saviour is a *Gesamtperson* ('whole person') who unites the human being with himself.

The way Theissen analyses the Pauline soteriological symbolism is a very fruitful one. Not only because he points to the Pauline variety of concepts, which could be extended to the whole of the New Testament (Bible), but also because he demonstrates that salvation is not a given abstract idea for which Paul invented appropriate terminology. For Paul the only way to proclaim salvation in Christ was to use certain concepts that he was acquainted with. There is no way of speaking about it outside those concepts. A symbolic structure does not simply involve a concept, but a complex structure of unities of meaning (*Sinneinheiten*) in which the state of non-salvation, the shift to salvation and salvation itself form a unity. This means that if Paul speaks of salvation, this is not a matter of choosing a concept, but the concept itself is the reflection of the whole of his reality that is involved in and related to the experience that Jesus makes God present in a saving way. It also reflects a connection between the way he speaks of salvation and of evil. The experience of evil will undoubtedly influence the way one experiences salvation and, the other way round, the experience of salvation will undoubtedly affect the way one speaks of 'evil'⁶⁶⁸. And both are influenced by the experience that Jesus is the saviour.

3. *Developments in the justification debate and modern exegesis*

Exegetical and ecumenical developments have not only shed new light on the question what role, biblically spoken, Jesus' death plays (or does not play) in relation to human salvation, but there has also been increasing attention given to the wide variety of concepts that lend expression to the meaning of salvation. What does this mean for the concept of justification?

We have seen that in the *Malta Report* justification was regarded as *an* important interpretation of the gospel. This qualification provoked a lot of reaction from the Lutheran side. Birmelé argued that the Lutheran participants had left their proper Lutheran position. He holds that justification is not an issue among others, but the central issue, which determines all other issues⁶⁶⁹. As *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* it is the cornerstone on which the faith of the Reformation rests. Hence, Birmelé equalizes salvation in Christ with justification through faith by grace alone. And so he intends to read the ecumenical dialogues in the light of this interpretation of salvation in Christ as the starting point and all-defining *proprium* of the Reformation. In any discussion this should be the Lutheran starting point⁶⁷⁰.

Neither in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues, nor in Birmelé's book is there ample discussion on the issue of this starting-point⁶⁷¹. It is assumed that the cornerstone of

⁶⁶⁸ Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 477.

⁶⁶⁹ Birmelé, *Le salut*, 11.

⁶⁷⁰ Cf. Lanooy, 'Towards a Broader Hermeneutics', 147 note 8 and 9. Cf. also M. E. Brinkman, *Justification in Ecumenical Dialogue: Central Aspects of Christian Soteriology in Debate*, IIMO Research Publication 45, Utrecht (IIMO) 1996, 201-203.

⁶⁷¹ We see a similar approach in the study by Martens who declares that as far as justification is concerned he bases himself on the Lutheran creed. He adds the explanation: "an exegetical justification of this position of the confession can only... be made by way of example". It is not by chance that his book opens with an

justification rests on the conviction that it is not Luther nor the Lutheran tradition that are at the basis of the *articulus*, but it is the Bible itself that, well interpreted, reveals that justification is the centre of the Christian message. And precisely here developments in biblical theology put a few question marks behind the starting-points. We do not say that the 'traditional' Lutheran position is untenable, but that those developments cannot be ignored and should be dealt with in order to keep the ecumenical discussion up-to-date.

The recent exegetical justification debate circles around the topic of the centre of Paul's thought. Confessional positions and presuppositions have played an important role in this exegetical discussion. The presupposition of A. Birmelé, although he does not elaborate his position, does not, exegetically spoken, come out of the blue. In particular the school of E. Käsemann can be considered as one of the main defenders of the idea that justification is the centre of Paul's theology, if not of the whole of the New Testament message⁶⁷². With regard to the ecumenical dialogues, we would name here J. Reumann, as a typical example of this school. Reumann is one of the leading names in the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. This dialogue is one of the few that pay *in extenso* attention to the biblical aspects in the justification debate, in particular in publishing the essays that have accompanied the discussion process. Reumann represents the Lutheran view by stating that the centre of Paul's thought must be in what is specifically Pauline, i.e. justification by faith. He rules out any contenders, like Christ, salvation history, sanctification, redemption or "being in Christ".

With regard to the place of justification in the biblical message, we can see that until the turn and beginning of the 20th century Lutheran exegetes *grosso modo* held the conviction of the centrality of justification⁶⁷³. From that time on some exegetes started to contest its central biblical place. They can be summarised by mentioning names of the Lutheran theologians like W. Wrede, W. Bousset and A. Schweitzer. From an exegetical perspective they were convinced that justification could not be regarded as the centre, neither of the Bible, nor of the theology of Paul. Wrede was convinced that justification, elaborated in juridical terms, was only a temporal concept for Paul to convince other Jews of the verity of his mission to the Gentiles. Hence, he saw justification as a partial theme, a polemical instrument, within the wider theological construct of Paul's thought and only relevant in Paul's particular situation. According to Wrede the real and relevant content of Paul's 'soteriology' is to be found in redemption from the power of death⁶⁷⁴. Bousset discerned Paul's soteriology in his Hellenistic *Mysterienfrommigkeit*. Schweitzer emphasized that several important elements of Paul's belief (ethics and sacraments) do not stand in any relationship to justification. From this, he concluded that justification could not be the centre of the apostle's thought. Schweitzer was convinced that it had to be sought in his eschatological-apocalyptic orientation, 'being in

analysis of the early Lutheran creeds; G. Martens, *Die Rechtfertigung des Sünders: Rettungshandeln Gottes oder historisches Interpretament? Grundentscheidungen lutherischer Theologie und Kirche bei der Behandlung des Themas 'Rechtfertigung' im ökumenischen Kontext*, *Forschungen zur systematischen und ökumenischen Theologie* 64, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1992, 17-18.

672 In his reaction on the article 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West' written by K. Stendahl, Käsemann wrote that "justification remains the centre, the beginning and the end of salvation history", E. Käsemann, 'Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans', in: *Perspectives on Paul*, Philadelphia (Fortress) 1977, 76.

673 For an overview from a mainly German perspective cf. O.H. Pesch/A. Peters, *Einführung in die Lehre von Gnade und Rechtfertigung*, Darmstadt (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft), 1981, 357, cf. also J. Plevnik, 'The Center of Pauline Theology', *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51 (1989) 461-478 and Brinkman, *Justification in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 57ff.

674 W. Wrede, *Paulus, Religionsgeschichtlicher Volksbücher I*, 5-6, Halle 1904, EngTr, *Paul*, London (Green) 1907.

Christ⁶⁷⁵.

After this first, predominantly German wave, new investigations into the letters of Paul and new insights into Paul's position in Jewish and Hellenistic culture, again gave rise to the question whether justification is the centre of the Pauline theology. Protestant scholars from the Anglo-Saxon/Scandinavian world, like W.D. Davies, N.A. Dahl, K. Stendahl, E.P. Sanders and J.C. Beker gave full attention to this question.

Sanders builds further on Schweitzer's argumentation. If justification is the heart of Paul's thinking one must be able to relate all aspects of Pauline thought to it. From several essential aspects this seems to be impossible. Sanders explains that the classical view that has been discerned between Christianity as a religion of grace and Judaism as a religion of merit is untenable. Both religions rest on the belief in God as a merciful God. Hence it cannot be the discovery of a merciful God that was the reason for Paul's calling and therefore it is unlikely that justification is the heart of the apostle's thought. It could only be the central concept if for Paul the heart of belief in Christ was to be found in the transfer from a religion of merit to a religion of grace.

The centre of Paul's theology, according to Sanders, is not to be found in this transfer, and consequently not in its terminology (like 'justification'). First and foremost, it is the participation in Christ to which all aspects of Paul's thought can be linked. This centre is based on the apostle's conversion and affirmation of Christ as the Messiah. Salvation in Christ means being united with him in the present and expecting a final participation. With regard to justification Sanders holds that it is Pauline terminology to explain how one becomes part of the body of Christ. Justification has to do with the transfer from one state to another. To hold that justification is the heart of Paul's soteriology is going halfway, since the method of salvation is justification (or reconciliation, or transformation, or freedom, or redemption). The final goal, however, is participation.

In the meantime Sanders is not the only New Testament scholar who doubts the centrality of justification in Paul's thought. For Beker justification (like other concepts such as reconciliation, freedom, adoption, being in Christ) belongs to a secondary level of Paul's way of expressing the meaning of the Christ-event. The term belongs to the contingent application and not to the coherent core: the latter Beker describes as the Christ-event in its signification for the apocalyptic consummation of history⁶⁷⁶.

K. Stendahl⁶⁷⁷ (in Romans) considers justification not as Paul's pervasive organizing principle, but as a concept that Paul uses in order to arrive at his major issue, the mission to the Gentiles. Paul uses justification as a temporary instrument in his discussions between Jews and Gentiles. Roman Catholic scholars like J.A. Fitzmyer and R. Schnackenburg tend to identify the centre of Pauline theology as Christ.

The discussion, to which we can only shortly refer here, has led many scholars not only to recognize that justification cannot be regarded as the central concept which Paul uses in his letters, but also that any single concept drawn from Paul's letters, cannot simply be considered as the one that covers Paul's arguments completely. Instead of this, scholars deal differently with the question of the centre of his thought. Some simply refrain from a hierarchy of

675 A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, London (Black) 1931, 225.

676 J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 264.

677 K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles (and other essays)*, Philadelphia (Fortress) 1976.

concepts and juxtapose them as possible expressions of a centre. This centre is then described in a very general way. J. Plevnik speaks of "the whole and undivided richness and mystery of Christ and of the Father's saving purpose through his Son"⁶⁷⁸. Fitzmyer speaks of christological soteriology as the heart of Paul's concern⁶⁷⁹. Others search for a 'deeper' level in Paul's writings, speaking of an apocalyptic framework (Beker) or 'narrative substructures' (R.B. Hays⁶⁸⁰). Again others try to explain why a soteriological concept can be regarded as 'a' central concept, without claiming exclusivity (M.A. Seifrid⁶⁸¹, M.E. Brinkman⁶⁸², M. Görtler⁶⁸³).

These developments show that the classic Lutheran position taking justification as starting-point of Reformed belief, based on Paul's theology, is not self-evident. This does not mean that justification has lost its central position. It means that if one wants to start with the particular position of justification in an ecumenical discussion, this is, of course, possible, but exegetically not incontestable⁶⁸⁴.

It seems to us that at least a trace of this discussion should be introduced into the outcome of an ecumenical discussion. Neglecting the results of biblical research, whether its outcomes are subject to discussion or not, will not help the dialogues to proceed. W. Klaiber concludes: "it makes one think: to realize how insignificant the role played by the newer exegetical research is in the justification discussion; the only norm seems to be the confessions of faith, affirmations of which are attested by appropriate citations from Paul"⁶⁸⁵.

To conclude this short overview of developments in New Testament exegesis with regard to soteriology we can say that in the course of the 20th century increasing attention has been given to the variety of soteriological vocabulary in the New Testament. Maybe this has been less the result of a discovery of something completely new, but more the consequence of a new, less confession-oriented and less doctrinal, more open-minded and context-oriented way of reading the Scriptures. On the other hand, it was also found impossible to look at the Bible from a purely objective and neutral viewpoint. The different ways in which the numerous concepts were seen, shows that every interpretation also implicates the interpreter. But the advantage has been, that the conclusion of the polyphony of concepts⁶⁸⁶ was not just a dry

678 J. Plevnik, 'The Center of Pauline Theology', 478.

679 J.A. Fitzmyer, *Pauline Theology: A Brief Sketch*, Englewood Cliffs (Prentice Hall) 1967, 16.

680 R.B. Hays, 'Crucified with Christ: A Synthesis of the Theology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Philippians, and Galatians', in: J. Bassler (ed), *Pauline Theology Volume I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, Minneapolis (Fortress) 1991, 227-246.

681 M.A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 68, Leiden-New York-Köln (Brill) 1992, 270.

682 Brinkman, *Justification in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 73-76.

683 "To summarize one can establish that in Paul's propagation of the Gospel justification takes an elementary position, but it must be seen in the general view of his God-centered soteriology... I contrast this elementary character of justification quite definitely with a central position, because the latter brings a too generalizing tendency with it. I reject this because Paul does not absolutize justification", M. Görtler. *Gottes geoffenbarte Heilstat in Jesus Christus: Zum Stellenwert der paulinischen Rechtfertigungsaussagen im Kontext der katholisch-lutherischen Konsensfindung*, Saarbrücken (VDM Publishing) 2008, 332.

684 "... soteriology, the theological reflection on God's initiative of grace within history, cannot be reduced to the question of justification or reconciliation. It is one of the possible approaches of God relating to man and the world in Israel and Jesus Christ., but by no means the only way or the best way to preach the Gospel of Christ", A.W.J. Houtepen, 'Towards an Ecumenical Soteriology', 2 (Leiden 1983, not published).

685 W. Klaiber, 'Rechtfertigung und Kirche: Exegetische Anmerkungen zum aktuellen ökumenischen Gespräch', *KuD* 42, 289.

686 "What we have is a polyphony of interpretations that give words to what is interpreted in different ways", Dalferth, 'Die soteriologische Relevanz der Kategorie des Opfers', 183.

observation, but one with a hermeneutic meaning, namely that from the very first salvific experience people had with Jesus it was principally impossible to find one category of thinking in which the fullness of the Christ-event could be described for all people of all times and in all places. Of course, in the Bible itself already the death of Jesus has, according to some, been correctly explained with reference to the concept of sacrifice, or, according to others, the meaning of the incarnation has been appropriately expressed in the concept of *theosis*, but from Scripture itself these concepts cannot be considered as *interpretamendum* by which every concept can be judged. When the dialogues reflect a history of soteriology in which now and then a preference for a certain concept was showed, this concept does not have its status of priority because of the timeless truth it possess, but because there have been times and circumstances in which this concept was regarded as the most adequate expression of salvation. The gospel does not speak to humans as abstract beings, but to concrete persons. And because concrete persons live in concrete places and times it is for that reason that the message of salvation should be expressed in many ways (*pollachôs legesthai*). The New Testament pluralism of concepts shows us that in soteriology the question at stake is not how we should interpret the unique story of Jesus as well as possible. After all who can make the final decision here? The conclusion at stake is the acceptance that every human being in his uniqueness, with his fears and longings at a certain time and place, is included in this salvific story.

10.5 Suggestions

1. The question of relevance

We have seen that the Bible includes a wide variety of concepts that explain the meaning of salvation. These soteriological concepts have a certain inner logic. They explain the systematics of a certain God-given transition of human beings from one state, seen as a state of deprivation, to another state of redemption, a state of release from that of deprivation, and an event that brings about this transition from one state to the other. In Christian soteriology the person of Jesus is regarded as decisive in this change of state.

The transition delineated above is described in concepts that are related to events in ordinary life. They refer, for example, to the world of the court, the temple, the throne, the family, the market place or the army. The logic of what happens there is metaphorically used to express God's salvific will for human beings.

Every concept consists of a unique combination of element and structure that are intimately related. This is evident where we speak of salvation and evil: they are two sides of the same coin and (normally) the positive side and negative side correspond. Enmity and peace belong together, like love and hatred, freedom and slavery. The inner logic of the cult differs from that of the court, and the structure of a change of power differs from the logic of the image of personal union. All these concepts presuppose a certain cultural climate in which the inner logic makes sense. When and where a certain logic, e.g. of a sacrifice, judgement, combat, victory, can be presupposed, its metaphorical use with regard to God can be understandable. So for soteriology it is very important to discern whether and how much the concepts are related to certain cultural contexts. The inner logic of a concept does not automatically have an abiding self-evidence. Of course this does not mean that soteriology should surrender to an easygoing plausibility, but on the other hand it should not capitulate too easily in assuming that what once was plausible and understandable remains so. A certain culturally determined

plausibility cannot simply be declared to be a normative condition of comprehension for all times and places⁶⁸⁷. The question is how in today's cultural context with its contradictions and aporia's one can speak with an understandable and plausible inner logic of God's salvific work. Time and again the question must be asked in what sense the assumptions that are part of every soteriological concept, do justice to the anthropological aspects of its content, in what sense do they rightly and helpfully interpret the situation of mankind⁶⁸⁸.

Consequently, every time (and place) creates its own soteriology⁶⁸⁹, a process that, as we have seen, already took place within Hebrew communities, reflected in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. This was continued in early Christian communities which, in relation to the Old Testament, re-interpreted in gospels, letters, etc. their own situation. A soteriology that is based on an intellectually constructed scheme, that has an inner logic, but does not relate to the reality of the context in which it is presented, will not 'work'⁶⁹⁰. So the pluralism of concepts is not just a way of providing some variety, nor is it something we just have to take for granted, but, in our opinion, its value has to be estimated on a hermeneutical level. This cannot only lead away from a too limited focus on one concept (with all its, including church dividing, consequences), but, and this is more important, it urges church and theology time and again to speak of salvation in ways and words that go along with the time and place when and where they are used.

2. The meaning of salvation throughout history

In fact, we find a similar pattern in the history of church and theology. The early Christian creed of Nicea-Constantinople is quite elaborate with regard to christological concepts, but the soteriological message is short and open: "... for us and for our salvation". And so it has been throughout history. Theologians like G. Greshake and W. Beinert underline that soteriology is one of the few statements of faith that in Christian tradition never was officially object of a (conciliar) decision that resulted in the shaping of a dogma⁶⁹¹. In his article 'Jesus Christus der Erlöser von Sünde und Tod', Beinert argues that, contrary to other themes of systematic theology, a comprehensive treatment of soteriology is lacking, but he adds that this is "closely related to the issue itself". According to him, apart from the Middle Ages, soteriology has never been subject to strict systematic attention: "Salvation and Evil are no abstract and once and for all to be defined quantities, but time and again they are newly modified by the historical situation"⁶⁹².

687 Werbick, *Soteriologie*, 136.

688 Werbick, *Soteriologie*, 52.

689 D. Wiederkehr, *Glaube an Erlösung: Konzepte der Soteriologie vom Neuen Testament bis heute*, Freiburg (Herder) 1976; Greshake, *Gottes Heil - Glück des Menschen: Theologische Perspektiven*, Freiburg (Herder) 1983

690 Houtepen, *For Us and Our Salvation*, 41; W. Beinert, 'Jesus Christus der Erlöser von Sünde und Tod: Überblick über die Abendländische Soteriologie' in: K.J. Rivinius (ed), *Schuld, Söhne und Erlösung in Zentralafrika (Zaire) und in der Christlichen Theologie Europas*, Sankt Augustin 1983, 209: "The hiatus between situative problem-description and Christian problem-solution determines the crisis in the Church in modern times".

691 "As astonishing as it sounds: it (the teaching authority of the Church, RL) has never expressed itself in definite terms, in recto, on this theme" in: Beinert, 'Jesus Christus der Erlöser von Sünde und Tod', 198; and Greshake holds that "salvation through Jesus Christ is one of the few central statements of faith which were never the object of a *direct* and *expressed* doctrine; there were even up to Anselm only initial efforts towards making it the object of theological theoretical and *specifically* controversial education", Greshake, *Gottes Heil - Glück des Menschen*, 50. Of course one has to admit with Greshake that the christological dogmas of the first centuries did have soteriological intentions as well.

692 Beinert, 'Jesus Christus der Erlöser von Sünde und Tod', 198.

How they have changed over the ages is described by a number of theologians and parallel to the descriptions of biblical pluralism they agree on the basic assumption of pluralism, but they do not agree on the way this pluralism can be unfolded. A very general and superficial distinction is the well-known typology of soteriology related to the incarnation and to the cross. One of the first distinctions with a firm basis was that of F.C. Baur, who divided Christian tradition into several phases in which objectivity and subjectivity played an important role⁶⁹³. With respect to his vision Protestant theology in the 19th century was acquainted with the division into mystical – juridical – moral (or subjective) salvation. In the 1930's G. Aulén also presented a division into three. His influential categorization is characterised by christology and discerns the change of central soteriological motifs into *Christus victor*, *Christus victima* and *Christus exemplar*.⁶⁹⁴ W. Pannenberg distinguishes between seven types⁶⁹⁵ whereas W. Beinert identifies three periods in the 'Abendlandische Erlösungstheologie'. The first period, that of the Early Church (Alte Kirche), he calls the period of 'Christ oriented soteriology'. The second period, that of the Middle Ages, starting with Augustine, he calls the period of 'grace oriented (Gnadentheologische) soteriology'. The third period Beinert does not relate to a theme, but calls this period the period of 'salvation in a secularized world' in which three essential themes have to be dealt with: the transcendental, universal and the christological side of salvation, summarised as the catholicity of the message of salvation. G. Greshake divides the change of salvation images into three types: salvation as *paideia* through Christ against the background of the cosmological way of thinking of the ancient Greeks the 'ordo' between God and human beings, and, thirdly, salvation as an inner moment of history⁶⁹⁶.

3. The polyphony of the concepts

Hence, the final interpretation of salvation has always remained open (despite later formulation of salvific theories, like that of Anselmus), and precisely this lack of systematisation gave way to a very rich polyphony of concepts in the language of the liturgy, theology and (personal) faith, a richness that was based on the biblical pluralism of concepts. And vice-versa, because this polyphony of concepts was part and parcel of the Christian tradition it preserved the tradition from a too rigid form of systematisation⁶⁹⁷. In his book *Einführung in die Lehre von Gnade und Rechtfertigung* O.H. Pesch describes this flexibility and on-going enrichment of the soteriological field of expression as follows:

The mystery of the grace of God is like a wonderful tree in the inner courtyard of a castle. Through each window one sees a different side of the tree. But everyone sees one and the same tree. Every theologian in the history of the Church has looked at the mystery of the grace of God out of different windows, the present-day theologians do just the same. Even if the theologians have frequently argued about the best places at the windows, they knew that they would only see the same tree, well or less well. This argument keeps them together"⁶⁹⁸.

Whether this argument kept the theologians really "together" is the question. The history of

693 F.C. Baur, *Die christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Tübingen, 1838.

694 G. Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, London (SPCK) 1975¹¹.

695 1. Deification through Incarnation; 2. Deification through Assimilation to God; 3. The Christology of Vicarious Satisfaction; 4. The Christology of God's Grace Alone; 5. The Prototype of the Religious Man; 6. The Ideal of Moral Perfection; and 7. The Christology of Pure Personality; W. Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man*, Philadelphia (Westminster Press) 1968, 39-46.

696 Greshake, *Gottes Heil - Glück des Menschen*, 52.

697 Greshake, *Gottes Heil - Glück des Menschen*, 51.

698 Pesch, *Einführung*, 394.

church divisions shows that the struggle has also led to divergence, disagreement, separation of churches, mutual anathema. Theologians and confessions have always thought that their view of the "tree of grace" was better than that of other theologians and confessions. Hence they declared a particular expression of salvation as normative and consequently it changed from concept to *interpretandum* by which the other concepts were judged.

4. Bilateral ecumenical dialogues and soteriology: drawing up the balance

It is undoubtedly the merit of the bilateral ecumenical dialogues that in the course of the 20th century Christian confessions felt more and more the need for a mutual accountability with regard to their respective traditions. Looking back on half a century of ecumenical dialogues this seems to be an obvious statement, but in the light of a long history of mutual disagreements, condemnations and exclusions, this is not self-evident.

In bilateral ecumenical dialogues the subject dealt with has not always been soteriology, at least not explicitly. In this study we have tried to demonstrate that the underlying question, beneath discussions about issues like ministry, baptism, the eucharist and other topics related to ecclesiology, was nevertheless very often related to soteriology. In a way this is 'inevitable' because church division can only be justifiable as long as it is based on the heart of the Christian faith. And soteriology, the question about who is the Saviour, and how, and what salvation is, pertains to the heart of the Christian faith.

That is why it is all the more satisfying that, in their discussions, the Christian confessions have not only given account of their respective positions, but they have also made progress in mutual understanding and unity. The most important step in this case has been that *grosso modo* we can conclude that there is mutual recognition and acknowledgement of the polyphony of soteriological concepts. This is a fruit of developments in biblical-theological research in the course of the 20th century, that through e.g. the bilateral ecumenical dialogues have become part of the church tradition. As a result of those dialogues the polyphonic way of thinking about salvation has entered the church.

To this we might add that following on from this success, the dialogues themselves have become a form of salvation, more precisely, a form of reconciliation which we can describe as a mutual recognition of a broader way of interpreting salvation. This was based on a re-reading of Scripture and tradition which surpasses all confessional fixation. E.g. the common declaration on baptism, eucharist and ministry (BEM) is a concrete result of those attempts. It has rediscovered the necessary unity for a common understanding of baptism and the Lord's supper, a unity that is not an end in itself, but touches already upon the fullness of salvation in the sacraments.

However, it is not that the acceptance of a certain soteriological pluralism in all dialogues has led to a broader understanding of salvation. The pluralism of soteriological concepts has remained a topic of discussion in some of the dialogues. In particular in those dialogues where the conversations have focused on the place of the doctrine of justification in church and theology, dialogues in which particularly the Lutheran tradition was involved, the question of pluralism has not yet been settled. Moreover, the dialogues have showed an increasing inclination to change their focus from 'meaning' to 'appropriation' with regard to salvation and a declining interest in the question as to what salvation could mean in a specific context. This shift has had a three-fold consequence, namely a fixation on history and ecclesiology and a lack of attention to the question of reception.

First of all, we see that a gap has developed between a context-oriented soteriology on the one hand and dialogues that revert to classical soteriological concepts, without relating them to the context in which they are used, on the other. It is true that this historical fixation has led to a fruitful re-reading of the ancient soteriological disagreements within the Christian tradition, but its drawback was that in general it was not asked what this re-reading meant for the contemporary ecumenical context. Hence, the agreement on the concept of justification in the Lutheran-Reformed dialogue, which culminated in the Joint Declaration, does accept a form of polyphony of the soteriological concepts, but the result of the agreement is primarily based on a historical re-reading of the ancient questions from the time of the Reformation. The question is hardly addressed as to in what sense the concept of justification is a relevant one for church and society nowadays.

Next to a certain historical fixation, most of the dialogues move rather quickly from a conversation on the meaning of salvation towards a discussion on the appropriation of salvation and especially on the role of the church in this process, in whatever form. And so the main concern of the dialogues becomes ecclesiology. Problems and bottlenecks like the relationship between faith and baptism, the function of the sacraments, like that of penitence, the meaning of the eucharist and in particular the sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' death, the relationship between justification and sanctification, the role of the community of the church as *koinonia* are subject of discussion. In this discussion a certain consensus as to the fact that the church plays a particular role in the appropriation of salvation is present, but doubts remain about the mutual relationship between e.g. the individual and the community, faith and institute, Scripture and tradition, the meaning of the church as fruit of the divine word or as sacrament of divine grace. The conception that the church itself, not only in its appropriative role, but also as the communion of believers, could be a sign of salvation, a healing community (salvation as 'Heil') in which humans are brought together, is hardly elaborated. The fixation on ecclesiology is related first and foremost to the role the church plays in the appropriation of salvation and this is, according to the confessional tradition, sometimes maximized and is sometimes minimized.

A third point of particular interest is the lack of interest in the reception of the dialogues. It is not easy to indicate where this originates. Without doubt, it has to do with a lack of communication, but it could also have to do with the content of the dialogues themselves. Could it be that their focus on history and ecclesiology stands in the way of sincere attention paid to their actual meaning? The question about the soteriological relevance of what in the ecumenical dialogues is under discussion is hardly posed. In other words, dialogues tend to operate answer-driven, more than question oriented. The answers given are answers to questions that have to be asked (mainly history and/or ecclesiology oriented) but at the same time these answers do not relate easily to the questions that, once posed, would put the dialogues in the centre of contemporary theology and church. In the soteriological debate the dialogue partners discuss what is necessary, but what at the same time is not sufficient.

Precisely because in ecumenical dialogues the goal should not only be a concern for the unity of the church, but also for its renewal, it is essential that in those dialogues space be created for a genuine discussion on soteriological concepts which in their expression connect the dialogue with the time and space in which it is held. This would be stimulating for the dialogues and their reception as the opportunity would be offered not only to work on a specific problem that obstructs their way to unity, but also the possibility to think creatively about a common view of salvation at a specific time and in a specific context. The possibility

here is to consider an interpretation of salvation as being e.g. personal development, the gift of self-realization, freedom or happiness.

5. Concluding remarks

This study, *Ecumenism and Salvation*, was not an investigation into the concept of salvation in the Christian tradition. Starting-point were the ecumenical dialogues, in particular the bilateral ones, and their role and place in the ecumenical debate that began in the 1960's. Closer consideration has shown that many of the inter-confessional problems which at first sight come to the forefront as disagreement on baptism, eucharist, ministry and the role of the church, in the end refer to different understanding of the role of the church in the appropriation of salvation. This is the reason why in the course of time the dialogues have moved more and more towards debates about the church. This development has led to a narrowing of the ecumenical perspective, since the soteriological question is thus reduced to the question as to how and by what or whom salvation is appropriated. Hence, the question as to what salvation is, is not yet answered. It is the merit of the dialogues that they have recognized and acknowledged a broadened perspective with regard to the meaning of salvation in the light of what has been said in Scripture and tradition. It will help ecumenism to progress when, in the mutual discussions, this recognition and acknowledgement is not only confirmed but also accepted as starting-point for further conversations on the meaning of salvation for people of today.

Summary in Dutch

In deze studie getiteld *Oecumene en heil: een kritische beoordeling van het heilsbegrip in bilaterale oecumenische dialogen (1970-2000)* presenteren wij een analyse en evaluatie van een aantal bilaterale oecumenische dialogen met het oog op het heilsbegrip dat zij hanteren. We gebruiken daarbij de term 'heil' als een omvattende beeldwoord dat verwijst naar de verschillende, in schrift en traditie voorkomende heilsmodellen. Deze modellen zijn aan verandering onderhevig afhankelijk van de tijd en de plaats waar zij een rol spelen in het soteriologisch vertoog, of zoals G. Greshake het bondig formuleert: Iedere tijd kent zijn eigen heilsvraag. Het is daarom niet verwonderlijk dat er aan deze heilsmodellen in de diverse confessionele, theologische, culturele en sociaal-politieke contexten verschillend gewicht wordt toegekend. Het zijn juist deze accentverschillen die in de loop van de tijd hebben geleid tot confessionele controversen, bijv. inzake rechtvaardiging en heiliging of inzake een persoonlijk opgevatte verlossing en een meer op politieke en sociale omstandigheden gerichte bevrijding (Bangkok, 1972).

Sinds het begin van de jaren '60 hebben oecumenische bilaterale dialogen zich beziggehouden met deze controversen. Hoe hebben zij dat gedaan? Zochten zij bijv. naar convergentie en hoe dan? Bleek er consensus mogelijk als het ging om het aanvaarden van een pluraliteit in heilsopvattingen of bleef het bij een vriendelijk wederzijds uitwisselen van elkaars standpunten. Verdisconteerden de dialoogpartners de resultaten uit andere vakgebieden dan die van de oecumenische theologie in hun rapporten en hebben zij kunnen en willen bijdragen aan de vorming van een oecumenische theologie die niet alleen intern hout snijdt, maar zich ook kan verantwoorden in het actuele en seculiere debat over de vraag wat heil is?

Met deze publicatie bevinden wij ons niet op onontgonnen terrein. Het is m.n. A. Birmelé geweest die in zijn boek *Le salut en Jésus-Christ dans les dialogues œcuméniques* al eerder over de verhouding soteriologie en bilaterale oecumenische dialogen publiceerde. Zijn aandacht betrof vooral de Lutherse-Rooms Katholieke dialoog en de specifieke discussie over de rechtvaardigingsleer. Birmelé heeft laten zien dat waar veel dialogen bekende onderwerpen als doop, ambt en avondmaal/eucharistie tot thema hebben, op de achtergrond van de discussie over deze thema's accentverschillen en controversen omtrent rechtvaardiging en heiliging een rol spelen en dat het juist deze soteriologisch georiënteerde accentverschillen en controversen zijn die een ecclesiologische convergentie of consensus moeilijk maken, dan wel verhinderen.

Deze studie trekt de vraagstelling van Birmelé die vooral de op de ecclesiologie is geconcentreerd bewust breder. Waar Birmelé zich vooral toelegt op de vraag wat de rol van de kerk is in de toe-eigening van het heil (instrumentaliteit) zal het in de analyse en evaluatie van deze studie ook gaan om de vraag wat de dialogen over de betekenis van het heil te zeggen hebben. Kort en goed: het gaat niet alleen om de vraag hoe je 'het' krijgt, maar ook om 'wat' je krijgt.

Om een antwoord op deze vragen te krijgen is een raster met vragen opgemaakt dat telkens op de dialogen in kwestie wordt toegepast. Niet alle dialogen komen daar voor in aanmerking. We spreken inmiddels van een tweehonderdtal dialogen dat werd of nog altijd wordt gehouden. Er is daarom gekozen voor die dialogen die expliciet over heil spreken, waarbij overwegend is gekeken naar de internationale typen in de periode van 1970 – 2000. Daarbij

moet worden gezegd dat het eerste jaartal eenvoudiger is te verantwoorden dan het tweede. Het is nu eenmaal zo dat de bilaterale oecumenische dialogen in de jaren '60 zijn opgestart en dat de eerste resultaten aan het einde van dat decennium het levenslicht zien. Het jaartal 2000 heeft op het eerste gezicht wellicht iets willekeurigs, maar gezien het feit dat de wijze waarop de dialogen plaatsvinden een buitengewoon heterogeen proces is, herbergt ieder jaartal een vorm van willekeur in zich. Er is gekozen voor het jaar 2000 omdat aan het einde van de 20e eeuw het voor de vraagstelling van dit onderzoek zo belangrijke document *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, vrucht van de internationale Lutherse–Rooms-Katholieke dialoog, verscheen.

De onderzoeksvraag naar de rol van de soteriologie in de dialogen is onderverdeeld in vier subvragen die samen het raster voor de analyse vormen.

Het betreft de volgende vragen, waarbij in de analyse de volgorde van ondergeschikt belang is gebleken:

- (1) Wie schenkt heil en wie heeft de gever op het oog?
- (2) Op welke manier is Christus de centrale persoon door wie heil wordt geschonken?
- (3) Hoe wordt heil toegeëigend en wat is de rol van de kerken hierin?
- (4) Wat zijn de belangrijkste heilsconcepten?

Voordat met deze analyse wordt begonnen, worden in **hoofdstuk 1** eerst de bilaterale oecumenische dialogen geïntroduceerd. Zij maken deel uit van de brede oecumenische beweging die voortkomt uit de internationale zendings- en jeugdbeweging en uit het groeiend internationaal bewustzijn van de grote kerkelijke confessies dat in de loop van de negentiende eeuw ontstond. In de loop van de twintigste eeuw krijgen deze langs confessionele lijnen georganiseerde kerkelijke organen steeds meer te maken met kritiek. In tegenstelling tot de Wereldraad van Kerken die transconfessioneel georganiseerd is, zouden de zogenaamde *World Confessional Families* het gevaar lopen 'spiritueel lui' (W.A. Visser 't Hooft) te worden en zich zelf te beschouwen als een doel op zich. Dat verandert als zij zelf deel gaan nemen aan de oecumenische beweging, als *Christian World Communions*.

Het is vooral Rooms-Katholieke Kerk die daartoe de aanzet geeft als zij in de jaren '60 op het oecumenische toneel verschijnt. Het lidmaatschap van de Wereldraad van Kerken blijkt een brug te ver te zijn, ook al wordt er intensief samengewerkt in bijvoorbeeld *Faith and Order*, maar de voorkeur voor de bilaterale oecumenische dialoog is duidelijk. Zo wordt het overleg met één andere gesprekspartner over zaken die een mogelijke convergentie of consensus in de weg kunnen staan, een belangrijke poot in de oecumenische beweging en participeert de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk daarin krachtig.

Binnen korte tijd ontstaat een mozaïek aan bilaterale dialogen tussen allerlei confessies op nationaal, regionaal en internationaal niveau. Elk hebben zij een eigen doelstelling, variërend van het streven naar volledige eenheid tot het uitwisselen van elkaars standpunten en het wegnemen van bestaande vooroordelen. In het *Forum over bilaterale gesprekken* wordt sinds 1978 regelmatig overlegd over de korte termijn-doelstellingen en lange termijn-visies en hoe deze zich tot elkaar verhouden binnen en tussen deze dialogen.

Wat de thema's betreft is het mozaïek al even divers, maar omdat bilaterale dialogen doorgaans hun uitgangspunt nemen in de concrete verschillen tussen beide tradities, waaiert de thematiek vaak minder uit dan in de multilaterale dialogen van *Faith and Order*. Van

oudsher zijn avondmaal/eucharistie, ambt en doop belangrijke thema's, en vandaaruit komt in de loop van de jaren tachtig de nadruk te liggen op de ecclesiologie. We zagen al bij Birmelé dat die thema's soteriologische connotaties hebben, juist in vragen over de toe-eigening van het heil. Vaak komt de soteriologie dus ter sprake via de 'omweg' van de reflectie op thema's als avondmaal/eucharistie, doop, ambt en ecclesiologie. In sommige dialogen zijn deze soteriologische connotaties echter tot gespreksthema verzelfstandigd, maar het moet gezegd worden dat dat ten opzichte van de andere, bekendere thema's relatief weinig voorkomt. We hebben er voor gekozen om onze aandacht vooral op die dialogen te richten waar de soteriologie expliciet tot gespreksthema is geworden.

Voordat we de bilaterale dialogen aan de orde stellen, kijken we eerst terug op de multilaterale dialoog van *Faith and Order* uit 1937. Het zou de enige keer zijn dat *Faith and Order* zich zo expliciet bezighield met soteriologie. Gezien de meer diachronische benadering van de bilaterale dialogen is het niet verwonderlijk dat de soteriologie daar meer aandacht krijgt. Zij houden zich immers vooral bezig met de thema's die convergentie en consensus in de weg staan en de soteriologie is er één van. Dat betreft dan vooral de kerken uit de Westerse traditie. Het is juist daar dat verschillen in opvatting over de soteriologie kerkscheidend hebben doorgewerkt.

Exemplarisch voor de vraagstelling is de al eerder genoemde *Faith and Order* conferentie uit 1937. In het gedeelte genaamd *De genade van onze Heer Jezus Christus* verkondigt de conferentie dat er ten aanzien van de genade verregaande overeenstemming is en dat zij geen reden meer is voor een blijvende verdeeldheid tussen de kerken. Maar met de afwezigheid van de Duitse Lutherse kerken en de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk bij het gesprek kan deze overeenstemming niet alom rekenen op bijval. Ondertussen is goed te zien dat de discussies ook hier cirkelen rondom de rol van de mens in de toe-eigening van het heil, op de verhouding tussen rechtvaardiging en heiliging. De vraag wat hierbij de rol van de kerk is, is in Edinburgh nog van ondergeschikt belang. Wel speelt tijdens de conferentie de vraag wat de discussie omtrent de genade en heil nu betekent voor de wereld en tijd waarin de conferentie wordt gehouden, maar daarvan is niets terug te vinden in de conclusies van het rapport.

In hoofdstuk 2 – 9 analyseren we een achttal dialogen, waarvan sommigen meerdere teksten uit verschillende perioden van de dialoog bevatten. Iedere beschrijving en analyse van een rapport wordt afgesloten met een samenvatting van de resultaten die zijn geordend naar de vier onderzoeksvragen. We beginnen in **hoofdstuk 2** met de Lutherse – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog en werken van het *Malta Report* uit 1972 via het Amerikaanse *Justification by Faith* (1983) en het internationale rapport *Church and Justification* (1994) toe naar *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* uit 1999. Het zal niet verbazen dat soteriologisch gesproken het concept van de rechtvaardiging in deze dialoog het belangrijkste is, hoewel aanvankelijk, te weten in het *Malta Report*, er ruimte is voor een bredere opvatting en ook concepten als vrijheid en verzoening aan de orde komen. In **hoofdstuk 3** behandelen we de internationale Anglicaanse – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog (ARCIC) aan de hand van het rapport *Salvation and the Church* uit 1987. Net als het rapport van de Reformed⁶⁹⁹ – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog, *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* (1990) (zie **hoofdstuk 4**) wordt deze dialoog inhoudelijk bepaald door de verhouding tussen soteriologie en ecclesiologie. Dat is minder het geval in de Evangelische – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog die in **hoofdstuk 5** aan de orde komt. Het rapport van deze dialoog dat zending en evangelisatie als thema heeft, gaat over

699 Het Engelse 'Reformed' laat zich moeizaam in het Nederlands vertalen. De begrippen 'Hervormd' of 'Gereformeerd' zijn te veel gekleurd door de geheel eigen geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme om een van hen hier te kunnen gebruiken.

de relatie tussen individu en heil (*Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission*, 1986). Dat geldt ook voor de internationale dialoog tussen Methodisten en 'Reformed'. In het rapport *Together in God's Grace* (1987) dat in **hoofdstuk 6** aan de orde komt, gaat het over individu, verkiezing en vrije wil. In de Lutherse – 'Reformed' dialoog in **hoofdstuk 7** concentreren zich zowel het Europese *Leuenberg Agreement* uit 1973 als het rapport van de internationale dialoogcommissie *Toward Church Fellowship* (1989) op de soteriologie als het centrum van waaruit gewerkt wordt aan kerkelijke eenheid. In de regionale dialoog tussen de Lutherse en Orthodoxe traditie zien we een ander procedé. In het Finse – Russische rapport *Dialogue Between Neighbours* en de Noord-Amerikaanse Lutherse – Orthodoxe dialoog (*Christ in Us and Christ for Us*, 1992) draait het vooral om twee soteriologische kernbegrippen uit beide tradities: rechtvaardiging en vergoddelijking (*theosis*). We spreken daarover in **hoofdstuk 8**. Tenslotte komt in **hoofdstuk 9** het *Dublin Report* (1976) aan de orde, een rapport van de internationale dialoog tussen Methodisten en Rooms-Katholieken. Hier draait het om de vraag naar de betekenis van het heil voor de hedendaagse tijd en de inhoud van het getuigenis van de kerk.

Wat de analyse van deze dialogen oplevert, wordt geëvalueerd in **hoofdstuk 10**, mede tegen de achtergrond van dialogen die geen aparte analyse kregen. Het concept rechtvaardiging is in de geanalyseerde dialogen het meest prominent aanwezig. Hoe de verhouding is tot andere concepten die ook uitdrukking willen zijn van wat heil betekent, wordt in de dialogen verschillend weergegeven. Maar het is de winst van de dialogen dat er over de hele linie sprake is van aanvaarding van een gerechtvaardigd pluralisme dat uitdrukking wil geven aan de vele wijzen waarop de betekenis van heil wordt verwoord.

In sommige dialogen wordt dit impliciet voorondersteld, maar in een aantal dialogen waarin de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk in gesprek is met andere kerken uit de Protestantse traditie wordt dit pluralisme ook wel expliciet genoemd (*Malta Report*, *Justification by Faith*, *Joint Declaration*, *Salvation and the Church* en *ERCDOM*). In de eerste drie genoemde dialogen, van Lutherse – Rooms-Katholieke huize, vindt dat plaats in het kader van de vraagstelling over de plaats van de rechtvaardiging in kerk en theologie. We verwijzen hierbij naar de indeling die H. Meyer en G. Gassmann maken in de wijze waarop er in de dialogen gesproken wordt over rechtvaardiging. Het eerste niveau is dat van de betekenis: wat is de inhoud van de rechtvaardiging, wat wordt er mee bedoeld? Op het tweede niveau draait het om de plaats van de rechtvaardiging in kerk en theologie: heeft rechtvaardiging als heilsconcept een specifieke, (be)oordelende betekenis? De derde wijze waarop rechtvaardiging aan de orde komt in de dialogen komt voort uit de tweede en betreft de praktische uitwerking ervan: hoe wordt rechtvaardiging toegepast in haar (be)oordelende, in haar criteriologische functie in oecumenische vragen? Meyer en Gassmann noemen, zij het in een noot, nog een vierde niveau, en dat betreft de vraag naar de contemporaine bruikbaarheid en betekenis van rechtvaardiging. Dat de auteurs dit niveau in een noot vermelden, heeft te maken met het feit dat deze vraagstelling wel voorkomt in de dialogen, maar slechts terzijde.

Wat zich nu in Edinburgh 1937 al aankondigt, maar toen als prematuur werd beschouwd, te weten een brede aanvaarding van de betekenis (eerste niveau) van rechtvaardiging, zet zich door in de dialogen, met name de Lutherse – Rooms-Katholieke. Het *Malta Report* is er het tastbare resultaat van. In hetzelfde rapport doet zich ook een tweede vraag voor, namelijk die naar de plaats van de rechtvaardiging in kerk en theologie, haar criteriologische functie. Het zal in het vervolg van de Lutherse – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog voornamelijk om deze vraag gaan en de daaruit voortkomende vraag hoe deze criteriologische functie kan worden toegepast. Over de betekenis van rechtvaardiging is men het eens, maar aan vragen over de manier waarop op

relevante wijze te spreken valt over heil als rechtvaardiging in de tijd waarin de dialoog zich afspeelt – wat in het *Malta Report* nog wel gebeurt – komt de dialoog eigenlijk niet meer toe.

Twee andere, grote dialogen die aandacht besteden aan de verhouding heil en kerk zijn de Anglicaanse – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog (*Salvation and the Church*) en de 'Reformed' – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*. Net als de Lutherse – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog stemmen zij in met een gezamenlijk verstaan van de betekenis van rechtvaardiging (eerste niveau), maar in tegenstelling tot de Lutherse – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog betekent deze instemming hier niet de opstap naar een toegespitst debat over de plaats van de rechtvaardiging (tweede niveau). Wel is er sprake van verschil van inzicht in de verhouding tussen kerk en heil, maar dit gaat bij de Anglicaanse – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog niet terug op de principiële rol van rechtvaardiging als criteriologisch concept. Bij de 'Reformed' – Rooms-Katholieke dialoog komt die criteriologische rol van rechtvaardiging wel aan de orde, maar neemt zij een minder principiële plaats in dan in de dialoog waarin de Lutheranen participeren.

De voornoemde dialogen (en de voortgang van andere dialogen bevestigt dat) laten een dubbele ontwikkeling zien. Aan de ene kant komt er ruimte voor een breder verstaan van wat heil is. Op basis van een herlezing van schrift en traditie kan niet meer gesproken worden vanuit één maatgevend heilsmodel. Heil kan alleen worden verstaan vanuit een principiële aanvaard pluralisme. Natuurlijk zijn er kerkelijke tradities waarin een bepaald concept de boventoon voert, maar die voorkeur, bijvoorbeeld voor rechtvaardiging, heeft geen kerk scheidend karakter meer. Verder zien we dat in een aantal dialogen (*Malta Report*, 1972 en *Dublin Report*, 1976) de ruimte van dit heilspluralisme ook gebruikt wordt om te komen tot de vraag welk(e) soteriologische concept(en) relevant zijn in het tijdsgewricht waarin de dialogen zich afspelen. De aanvaarding van het pluralisme geeft de soteriologie waarover de dialogen spreken de ruimte om te komen tot nieuwe of hernieuwde interpretaties. De open sfeer van de zendingsconferentie in Bangkok, 1972 over *Salvation Today* lijkt ook door te werken in de bilaterale dialogen. Dat blijkt echter van korte duur te zijn. Het gesprek over de vraag wat heil is, wat bijvoorbeeld rechtvaardiging zou kunnen betekenen, verdwijnt in de dialogen snel naar de achtergrond. Er doet zich een andere ontwikkeling voor, namelijk een toenemende concentratie op de vraag naar de toe-eigening van het heil en dan in het bijzonder naar de rol van de kerk hierin. Door deze verschuiving in de richting van de ecclesiologie vindt er een vernauwing plaats in het debat over de soteriologie, omdat vragen over betekenis en relevantie van het heil verdwijnen achter de toe-eigeningsvraag. Daarbij zijn drie uiteenlopende gedachtenlijnen te herkennen: 1. bij de toe-eigening van het heil ligt de nadruk op de rol van het individu zonder actieve betrokkenheid van de kerk; 2. bij de toe-eigening is de kerk actief, dan wel passief betrokken; en 3. bij de toe-eigening wordt de rol van kerk en individu geminimaliseerd: alle nadruk ligt op het omvattende werk van God. Deze gedachtenlijnen zijn niet één op één te verbinden met bepaalde confessies, het zijn meer tendensen. Door de nadruk die ze krijgen, doen ze de vraag naar de betekenis van de heilsbegrippen verbleken. Zo is de vraag naar eenheid een interne gelegenheid van de betrokken kerken geworden en raakt de opdracht die de dialogen doorgaans zichzelf geven, namelijk om te komen tot een gezamenlijk geloofwaardig getuigenis, uit het zicht. Dat getuigenis is niet alleen gediend met de bereikte eenheid ten aanzien van de erkenning van een zeker pluralisme in de articulatie en toe-eigening van heil, maar ook met aandacht voor wat de inhoud van dat heil is.

In het tweede deel van hoofdstuk 10 wordt als uitwerking van de vraag naar de betekenis van heil ingegaan op de bijbels-theologische ontwikkelingen die plaatsvonden in dezelfde periode als die waarin de dialogen zich afspelen. Allereerst wordt gekeken naar de toegevoegde waarde

van het Oude Testament voor de soteriologie. In de bilaterale dialogen wordt als het gaat om de soteriologie weinig verwezen naar het Oude Testament en als dat wel gebeurt, vormt Oude Testament vaak het negatief van het Nieuwe Testament, zoals bijvoorbeeld in *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. Er wordt met name ingegaan op de theologie van G. von Rad en C. Westermann en de synthese tussen hun beider opvattingen die bij B. Janowski wordt gevonden. Daarnaast wordt gekeken naar de ontwikkelingen in de Nieuwtestamentische theologie. Immers, ondanks de aanvaarding van een pluralisme in heilsmodellen blijkt in een aantal dialogen toch een zekere frictie waar te nemen tussen de exegetisch-hermeneutische positie die men de rechtvaardiging toekent en haar dogmatische positie, met name op het tweede niveau, te weten haar criteriologische functie. We zetten uiteen dat het Nieuwe Testament een uiteenlopend soteriologisch perspectief kent, zowel ten aanzien van de plaats en de rol van de persoon en het werk van Jezus, als ook ten aanzien van de rijke diversiteit aan heilsconcepten. We laten zien dat deze diversiteit zich ook doorzet in de Vroege Kerk, waar het credo van de Vroege Kerk het heilsperspectief niet vastlegt in één heilsmodel.

We sluiten dit onderzoek af met een aantal alinea's waarin we de bilaterale oecumenische dialogen de suggestie aan de hand doen zich niet uitsluitend te fixeren op wat soteriologisch gesproken de beide gesprekspartners van oudsher scheidt, maar zich ook te richten op de contemporaine relevantie van (historische) begrippen. Daarnaast zou er in het gesprek over de ecclesiologie, dat zich in het bijzonder toespitst op de rol van de kerk in de toe-eigening van het heil, ook kunnen gekeken worden naar de betekenis van de kerk zelf als heilsgemeenschap. En tenslotte zou het probleem van het gebrek aan receptie niet alleen de betrokken kerken moeten stimuleren die taak serieuzer te nemen, maar ook de dialogen zelf zouden kunnen bijdragen aan een betere receptie. Zij zouden, zoals gezegd, hun oecumenische taak niet alleen moeten zien als het oplossen van kerk scheidende problemen uit het verleden, maar ook hun blik meer naar buiten moeten richten, over de kerkmuren heen, naar de samenleving waarin men kerk is. Is het niet ook hun taak te zoeken naar een gemeenschappelijk en geloofwaardig getuigenis voor de wereld van vandaag? Het gaat in de oecumene toch niet alleen om eenheid maar toch ook om vernieuwing? De soteriologie biedt daartoe goede aanknopingspunten.

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Curriculum Vitae

Marinus Pieter Cornelis Frederik (Rienk) Lanooy was born on 20th May, 1964 in Oud-Beijerland, the Netherlands. He studied Theology from 1982-1988 at Utrecht University, where he obtained his Masters Degree. From 1988-1989 he participated in the World Council of Churches' Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies in Bossey, Geneva, Switzerland. He continued his studies from 1989-1991 at Leiden University, where he prepared for the Ministry in the Netherlands Reformed Church. From 1991-1996 he worked as Research Assistant at the Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research (IIMO), Utrecht.

He afterwards became Pastor of the Eglise Réformée Néerlandaise for the Dutch Community in Paris, France (1997-2004) and subsequently Pastor of the Protestant Church of Chaam, the Netherlands (2004-2009).

Since 2009 he has been Pastor at the Kloosterkerk in The Hague, the Netherlands, working together with his colleague, Margreet Klokke.

He is married to Karin Kuijper and together they have three children: Jan Pieter (19), Maarten (16) and Agnès (14).